

jubilat



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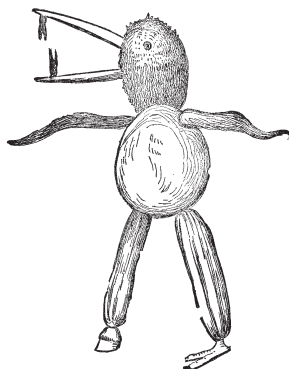
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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

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ARE WE THERE YET?

Dobby Gibson

You only have to make her one grilled cheese
in the suffocating heat of summer
while still wearing your wet swim trunks
to know what it's like to truly be in love.
And you only have to sit once
for a haircut in the air conditioning
with the lovely stylist to forget all about it,
and to forget anything in the universe
ever existed prior to the small, pink sweater
now brushing softly against your neck.
In this world, every birth is premature.
How else to explain all of this silence, all of this screaming,
all of those Christmas card letters
we hate about how well the kids are doing in school?
We're all struggling to say the same old things
in new and different ways.
And so we must praise the new and different ways.
I hate Christmas.
I miss you that much.
For I, too, have heard the screaming,
and I, too, have tried to let it pass,
and still I've been up half the night
as if I were half this old,
and just like you, I hate this kind of poetry
just as much as my life depends upon it.
They're giving away tiny phones for free these days,
but it's made a decent conversation
just that much more precious.

One medicine stops the swelling,
another medicine stops the first medicine.
Just like you, I entered this world mad and kicking,
without you, it's precisely how I intend to go.

STUNG

Peter Gizzi

A child I became a question
sitting on the grass.
To be told how lucky I am.
An open field.
This corporeal expanse
was a body too
in silver magnetism.
If I became this light
it wasn't luck. It was easy.
Bells falling away
along the divide of night.
Along the divide of night
an old face. A sorry dormer
leaning in askew
below the incoming thunder.
This was true and even if ever
I ran away. I ran
away. Above everything
I held one true thing.
This scene moved through me,
a seesaw. A picture
inside a question inside
the coming night.
Surprise. These trees rang
round my head, shored
up the sky. I went on
and on like a trial balloon

over the houses. Over
the roofs. Over my head.



To remember correctly
the color of the pale grass in March,
its salt hay blonde flourish.
To see it as it was,
faded cloth, mute trumpet,
the seam inside a day
the sun climbs.
Simple the life of the mind
standing outside in the grass
in March. Outside memory.
Spring interrupts
one cardinal monody
transmuted by a signal red
developed against
a draining blue horizon.
To want to go there
and to have been there
and to be there now.
Simple, this walking right now
by a river and not so clear
when transcribing this
unstable multiplying narrative spring.
It can't be called anything.
We too are sprung and wound
with evolution, I want to say.
That's it: love. Not spring.
I have felt it also

in quilted drowning snow
under the sheets
in a clanking house.
Clank, I love you.
Clank. Not spring.
Glossy grass wiggling
in a brightening sky.
The thrill of hair
standing on my limbs.

~::~~

To be and not to understand.
To understand nothing
and be content
to watch light against
leaf-shadowed ground.
To accept the ground.
To go to it as a question.
To open up the day inside the day,
a bubble holding air
bending the vista to it.
To be inside this thing,
outside in the grass place,
out in the day
inside another thing.

ALL YOU ASK FOR IS LONGING

Sean Thomas Dougherty

*Those strangers pairing off at last & each desiring
What little mercy the other can afford.*

—LARRY LEVIS

Y not that year empty with strangers. Y not the silence of wanting.
Y not when we laughed with rain with something, lounging high, touching
your bare shoulders, when I was born.

Y not your long hair that turns within. When the sirens begin. Y not a
kind of disruption, a kind of rupture by *arrangement*.

Y not the archeology of Other. Y not limbs, tattoos, the DTs at dawn, H's
widow's hungering, sweating on the fire escape smoking in her bra.

Y not out of style is loss. Your old clothes in boxes, someone's scrawled
name.

Y not from you as if dulled with liquor, on the bare mattress, your open
thighs. To step in their stillness was to become the word *erased*.

Y not a kind of rain, a kind of arms, a kind of shouting, after a while I
couldn't sleep without you.

Y not some of your friends when we were young, the one with stubble,
eyes like glass. When you were nothing.

Y not their frail bodies, shining.

Y not snow, the syllabics of suffering,
routine.

Y not elegies spray-painted on basketball courts, each stroke says *tomorrow*
I won't be here.

Y not waiting—thank you—ceaseless—passing of being human.

Y not my glance—stillness—blue listened for music in your room, an
ascension overheard through the paper walls.

Y not the way we'd map the cracks in the ceiling—the dim bulb absence
hummed.

Y not you, why can't I—you in this city at closing hour, this strange going
improvised ravine, summer rain among the living.

Y not towards your story, green indecipherable shadows, faces I want
would, longing, to cathedral—

Y not two voices that diminuendo, the point at which what is revealed,
is what leaves—

SHIFT

You're still a Super Fly female.

—GWEN STEFANI

*from the black trunk I shake out
my one American skirt*

—CHITRA BANERJEE DIVAKARUNI

*those declaring themselves against racism may be reluctant to
change because of resistance to change in general*

—DAVID THEO GOLDBERG

Hit shift: SUPER FLY fro on the subway between Parliament and Post-Apartheid. *Properly*, remembering near chanting that down on the first syllable in the club rocking gin and bub. She does it *Properly* long gone like Car Wash suds hipster Zoot Suits against chains, yet four millions sleep barred brethren you sleep in your *exploration of silence* Pulitzer hip for the noise is too loud but I say shout Bring on Da Noize Da Funk the P Funk Make my Funk pump in the back of yo trunk make the Soul Shimmy sway remake the world out of red clay beans and rice Jambalaya mish max mix it up Cajun with couscous on the side like a long-playing LP solo like Fred Anderson of the Chicago Art Ensemble playing free form candlelight moonshine American wrinkles around his mirrored syntax layered History riffs wind wayward redolent White America the officer compounds of Christ's gated-community the camps of aesthetic fascists lost in their fragmentation ironic sardonic bitter tenure instead of trembling ecstatic in beats shaking Groove Things sunshine Blame It On The Boogie Woogie to Avenue B damn times Dizzy times Good Times times two plus two is three in the 21st Century so astonishingly uttered these Loisada language dreams toward Nueva York Orange County rich white girl ska band gone solo Super Fly white female video uttered for each the word love for each

is Memorial shoemaker shopkeeper in the New World for the Old World for the lost names and the Yahrzeit light for *the nobody who would know* for the Hebrew and the Holocaust for the Woolworth's counter and the young men who refused to leave for the mothers who faced nightsticks and knuckles and the ghosts embrace coral necklaces train yard my people goat slaughtered who are my People, all people? Is this possible? Father sleep late for the factory is closed the shift differential is spent in the neighborhood of lost nickels in the church services in the Barrio where the priest was born in the blessing of English-less-ness in the Godfather's grace in the lost tongues in the tongue spoken for gratitude is a bus ride home from work for running with our backs to the flames to fall in love easily and you aren't afraid the door is closed for wearing braces is a signifier of class for struggle for a cigarette after coffee for our mothers' varicose veins and the long walk up the third flight of stairs for a hard boiled egg and a bottle of water in the hot sun leaning over the fields for the rum runners and the grape pickers spinning assimilated names in my hands I am a man something to lift to pick to shelf to make to play to pause to hold to sift to say my life is more than this signature this card passport license face to say I learned no I learn against this *aqui* to shimmy shake hunger of the old dialect the new dialect where we slept interlaced in the fields of everything earned to earn incarnate confession of the kitchen broom sweeping the dust out of the Tombs where they took the secret scrolls hear the young Babushka'd woman brush the crumbs off the counter at the last open diner where the Super Fly rest after a long night of something shaking with their spangles and their tight pants and their bodies imagination before the next shift their own identity that shine that digging out that last cigarette after coffee and the slow jam and the new steps and the new hair and the new length for the skirt you just bought that new long-playing-single that new language bearing down the track needed washing off your mascara taking off your uniform untying your hair the radio playing marimba of the red ribbon your man's hands his dirty hands from work and love and need a burning a burning river.

RESULTS

Rae Armantrout

I

Click here to vote
on who's ripe
for a makeover

or takeover

in this series pilot

Votes are registered
at the server
and sent back

as results.

Click here to transform

oxidation
into digestion.

From this point on,
it's a lattice
of ends
disguised as means:

the strangler fig,

the anteater.

I've developed the ability
to revise
what I'm waiting for

so that letter
becomes dinner
gradually

while the contrapuntal
nodding
of the Chinese elm leaves

redistributes
ennui

PARSE

I

Backwash of revelation:

to see these articulated,
new weeds
as one thing;

to hear bird-chirps
parse the plenum.

When aren't
we synonymous with
increased vigilance,

now with *this time*,
now *in this sense*?

3

Tongues tapping
the roofs

of our own mouths
to make meaning.

Then God diddles us
with this sunset,

its pale pinks and
tender blues. This

one-two rinse
reminds us of something,

if only our own
depth-of-feeling

TRANSLATION

The thing that makes us human,
monkey-see, monkey-do speed-up,
a “call to mimesis,”
now comes from everywhere at once.

~::~~

The cumulus
and the white flash
from under
the mocking-bird’s wing
make what?

~::~~

Repeat wake measurement.
“Check to see”
“Check to see,”
birds say,
“that enough time
has passed.”

UNITS

Being a threesome

of young palms,
a triangle
containing dusk,

a doubled
reflection which might yet
be redoubled,

is a way of being
one
by being numbered

so as to have not
begun again

oblivious,

in excess

from PASSIFLORA

Juliana Spahr

4.

Then one of them moved. And that changed things.

One of them moved from the island in the Pacific to an island in the Atlantic. Two of them stayed on the island in the Pacific.

But because one of them refused to live on the island in the Pacific with all its thought and its histories, they agreed to begin physically careening back and forth for a few years between various islands and climates and cultures. They spent the fall and spring on the island in the Pacific and then the summer and some of the winter on the island in the Atlantic.

They grew tired of this back and forth very quickly. The moving back and forth was both physically and emotionally hard. To get rid of this feeling—the feeling of disorientation—the two of them that were living on the island in the Pacific decided to move to the island in the Atlantic. They also moved to be near the one who refused to live on the island in the Pacific. They moved for love, for desire, for friendship. And they moved for other reasons also, reasons they couldn't fully articulate to themselves but instead felt in the gray matter at the backs of their brains. This gray matter held things up front like desires to have less sides to themselves and desires to have less emotion about the place where they lived and also desires to be surrounded by people who like them moved around a lot and somewhat valued the moving around as a way of learning about things even as they saw the limitations of this moving around, such as a certain rootlessness or a certain lack of historical perspective or a certain

inability to understand the ecosystems of the place. The gray matter would say to them that part of the move was just a desire to spend less time on planes, in cramped seats with twitchy legs breathing stale air and trying to sleep. But really these thoughts were only what the gray matter let go to the front of the brain.

The gray matter at the back of their brain told them to move to the islands in the Atlantic because the islands were known for their perversions and various sexualities, and they wanted to live someplace known for its perversions and various sexualities. The gray matter at the back of the brain wanted to move to the place that self-identified as a place of complicated sexuality, a place for people who liked to be getting in and out of various beds in various different ways. A place that celebrated different beds and different ways of bedding down and around. There were many myths about the sex lives of the people on the island in the Pacific that they had just left also, but the myths were different and just made them sad. The sexual myths of the islands in the Pacific were made by haole men who came from elsewhere, and as a result the myths reflected their colonial, their sexual values, their fantasies. The haole men presented the island in the Pacific as full of beautiful dark skinned women who liked to dance with their hips and really enjoyed the company of haole men over all other categories of humans. But the myths of the islands to which they moved, the islands in the Atlantic, were full of perversions of all sorts, and the stories told had all the genders in all the different combinations—even ones beyond the two that so defined their culture at that moment. They liked this. They liked that the islands in the Atlantic to which they moved were so famous for their perversions, so famous that televangelists mentioned them often as the root of all evil. In the hometown of one of them, many people called the islands in the Atlantic Sodom and the rest of the people called them Gomorrah. And this is what so attracted the gray matter at the back of their brain to the city. This was it.

The front of their brain did not admit that this is what attracted them. If asked, the front of their brain would have disowned it. It would have pointed out that their sex life was not as glittering as the sex life of the characters in the various television shows that were shown about the islands in the Atlantic that featured wealthy, vain, and self-centered characters of unusually distinctive beauty. Their sex life had no shiny sheets or group showers or accidental pregnancies after one-night stands. It was slower and more private than all this. It had lots of laundry and house cleaning in it. The front of their brain liked to think that their sex life had more respect in it and less panting. But sometimes it had more panting and less respect.

But neither the front nor the back of their brain knew what to say about their relations with one another. As a result, they tried not to talk about it. And when they did talk about it, both parts of the brain worked together to do so in the most boring way possible. They used detached pronouns or they used metaphors of impossible sexual positions or they were just really vague and hoped no one would notice.

But still that their sexual lives were shaped around triangles rather than straight lines did shape their lives, made the back of their brain realize that it wanted to live in certain places and not in others. Made it known that they wanted to live in a city of perversion and variety so they could disappear into all the variety and not worry about what others thought.

So they packed up. They packed their stuff into cardboard boxes, and they carried them down to the post office to be shipped to the island in the Atlantic on a boat. Then they got on a plane, and this plane flew off the island in one of the flight patterns that they could have seen from their lanai, had they been there on their lanai at that moment instead of sitting in the plane in a small compact seat.

Ten hours then passed in a haze of sleeping pills and salty food and then the plane landed on an island in the Atlantic.

The island in the Atlantic on which the plane landed was 1,377 square miles. It was nestled beside a continent, and it was connected by bridges and tunnels to the continent as well as to two other islands.

Because the island in the Atlantic was so close to a continent and because the islands in the Pacific were not, the places were very different. The islands near the continent were points of entry and had all the economic advantages that points of entry have. And these islands were close together, so people moved among the islands all day long effortlessly.

But there were other ways in which these islands were similar beyond their island-ness and their relation to the ocean. Both islands were full of concrete and very tall buildings. Both were dense with people. Both had oversized roles in the cultural imagination of the nation. The island in the Pacific was known for beauty and for the military. The other in the Atlantic was known for world culture, for immigration, and for finance. Both had colonial histories. Both had high land prices. Both places had a changed ecosystem as the result of birds released by those who came from other places.

These were the sorts of things they thought to themselves on the way from the airport to the apartment where the other of them lived. They wanted to only think of the things they were moving to. But they felt they also had to list the things they were moving from for the incantation to work, for there to be any meaningful width to their thinking, for it to be at all sophisticated. They knew this, but their grief at leaving various things—things like how the lighter green of the kukui indicated a stream in the side of the mountain—made it so they couldn't list them.

So they thought of the list of things they were moving to as they rode in a car from the airport to the apartment. They were moving to a connection with other islands and the continent; they were moving to being able to go between things; they were moving to a certain roughness and destruction, for the islands in the Atlantic were known for their toughness, for their guns, for their drugs, for their projects, for the dirtiness of their subways, for their organized crime, for their loudness and extremes, for putting great wealth and great poverty on the same street corner. At the same time they were moving to the certain, very specific beauty of the islands in the Atlantic. They were moving to the sun hitting the side of an old building and the very brick in the building lighting up with a certain sheen that was luminous and impossible to describe but deeply glowing as if the wealth of the industry in the buildings was so great that it seeped into the very mortar. They were moving to a horizon and then a spread of lights at night over this horizon, a horizon with so many levels and so much depth and so much wideness.

After many sleepless hours breathing bad airplane air and bad movies on a small screen they arrived at the apartment and they carried in their bags and they began the process of getting settled. One of them had a father who had been a singer on one of the islands for a while. He had sung songs in burlesque clubs, and as one of them grew up he sang to them (half in parody and half in celebration) songs about the city. He would sing words such as *If you can make it here, you can make it anywhere* to them in their beds late at night in the middle of the continent. And while they knew that he hadn't really made it there (as at the time they lived in a small rural town in the middle of the continent, a town without libraries or private schools), they still listened to the words of those songs with a sleepily mesmerized intentness, as if they were in a language they could understand if only they concentrated because they couldn't imagine at the time a place so privileged that it told people that they had made it or not anywhere. At the time that their father sang these songs, they

were living in a town where the highest building would eventually be six stories tall, and at the time of their singing that building hadn't even been built yet. Later in their life, they thought a lot about this six-story tall building even as they felt they were at a risk of overthinking about it. But they couldn't stop from seeing it as a sign of how low the aspirations were in the place where they lived. The buildings in their town didn't have bricks that glowed. It wasn't that the buildings had no aesthetic. But it was that they had a different aesthetic, one more transitory and utilitarian. There, buildings were not built out of hope but out of need. Which was fine. This place where they had grown up had an entirely different set of issues to deal with, but it did explain why they were so caught up in tall buildings and their bricks and their steel girders, a caught-up-ness that was not without its critiques or hesitations, not without its suspicions. But the caught-up-ness was one part of the beginning of an explanation of why they moved from the islands in the Pacific to the islands in the Atlantic. They got settled by thinking more and more about how the islands in the Atlantic were all about wideness and had a specific beauty of stability and time and solidity.

While on the island in the Pacific, they zoomed in and noticed leaf texture and plants growing on top one another; on the islands in the Atlantic, they spent all their time looking up and down avenues and streets, focusing on the distance, noticing the lines of bridges and the dialogue that the uneven heights of buildings in a row had with the air above them. They noticed filled space and empty space. There was so much height and then within that height so many humans and so much motion that they couldn't zoom in at all, and so they had to let all the height and the people and the motion flood into their minds; they had to open their minds to wideness. They had to open their minds to a different, dirtier, more layered beauty. A beauty of many different languages in one line at the post office, languages full of meaning and histories that they couldn't even recognize—guttural languages, languages that clicked, other languages that had rhythms too

intricate for their Midwestern ears to hold in their minds as anything but an unusual, unrecognizable, and thus beautiful song. They had to open their minds to a beauty of different and contradictory ideas. To a beauty of lostness and never feeling fluent but feeling that that was OK, that that was part of being in this place and that one was in this place of lostness, without fluency, with a whole bunch of other people. This ability to recognize one's self as lost and belonging with the others in the lostness—this is what made the place matter, what brushed off on them and made them matter and everyone around them matter also.

This was a place that told grandiose stories about itself, told others that it was a place to which people moved and it didn't matter how long you were at this place, that this place was for people from all over. Yet it wasn't really true. The nation which governed all these various islands had very restrictive rules and complicated passport checking booths at the borders to prevent large numbers of people from moving into the nation, to prevent large numbers of people from other nations from using up the wealth that the nation had accumulated at the expense of other nations on the planet.

And yet it was somewhat true, because the main difference between the islands in the Atlantic and the islands in the Pacific was that being born on one of the islands in the Atlantic had no extra meaning, granted no special privileges, was rarely even discussed. It was a city that celebrated the swarming movements of people. On the island in the Pacific people set down roots and then charted them in genealogies. People counted generations. On the island in the Atlantic people moved around in mass, changed their names, hid their nations of origin or exaggerated them, and did other things that people who are attentive to moving like to do. These islands in the Atlantic were so layered and so full of so many people from so many different places that various weird fevers were brought to the islands from other places by the constant movement of people. If

there was a plague or a virus or a bug or an animal-borne illness in any one corner of the globe, then at any one moment someone on the islands probably had it. Yet because the islands' residents were known for their resilience, they just took this up as yet another story they told themselves about the greatness of the islands. And it was true, although whether it was great or not they could not say, but the traffic through the islands carried a huge amount of all the information it was possible for humans to carry. And as the islands were so small in size and so dense with people who were constantly brushing up against one another and touching and pushing each other into and out of the subway and up the stairs and then out into more people, there was a constant exchange of air in and out of each other's lungs. So they got to the island in the Atlantic and they too began to breathe with others.

They lived on one of the larger islands but in a part of it near the smaller, more dense, and most prosperous island. They settled into an apartment with an upstairs and a downstairs. One of them had a desk downstairs. Two of them shared a room with two desks upstairs. They all set up their computers, and one of them built a network that connected all the computers. Each of them had folders that contained shared files and also folders that were password protected on their computer, and in these folders they kept their writing.

There were other things in this apartment. There were two rooms with beds. One bed was softer and one bed was harder. One bedroom, the bedroom of the harder bed, was full of light and had a tree outside the window and various sorts of city birds lived in the tree and sang city bird songs in the morning. One bedroom, the bedroom of the softer bed, was a room in another room and no light from the outside entered it and it often got stuffy in the night when the doors were closed.

They got used to each other again at these desks and in these bedrooms.

And they entered into the world of mundane worries and fights about who should take out the garbage and who had to sort the recycling and who had to clean the bathroom, and beneath all this mundaneness they had dreams in their soft and hard beds. One of them dreamed of being crushed by two big blue rubber balls, and that in order to stop the crushing they had to jump up and breathe, then hold their breath and jump down underwater, beneath the balls, and swim out. But in the dream they were afraid to swim out under the water, even though it would have been easy. Instead, they just stood there letting the two big blue rubber balls hit them in the face. One of them dreamed that they were getting a tattoo of birds—the hedge sparrow, the dipper, the peacock, the ostrich, the bird of paradise; all of them in flight or walking, whatever the individual bird’s preference—in a circle around their upper arm. One of them dreamed about Three Dog Night and the Three Stooges and opening and closing doors.

Their dreams were deep but this period of moving from one place to another place and having this motion take over their thoughts the way metaphor takes over poems was only a brief period. A period of some two months or so. During these months there were other things that they thought about. They thought about steel and concrete as invented, mongrel products. They thought about how the islands added concrete to themselves at the rate of one Hoover Dam every eighteen months. They thought about the starlings released into Central Park by Eugene Schiffe-*lin*, a man who founded an acclimatization society in order to introduce to this continent across the Atlantic all the birds in Shakespeare’s plays. They thought about the monk parrots that may or may not have escaped from a crate at Kennedy Airport and now lived in Brooklyn, where they built three-story homes of twigs along the power lines. They thought about the warm-weather plants that acclimatedly thrived in the area because of the heat that collected in the city’s large amount of concrete. They thought about the triggerfish, parrotfish, queen angels, butterfly fish, sergeant majors, spotfins, angelfish, damselfish, groupers, squirrelfish,

trumpetfish, and all the others that were washed up into the waters near Far Rockaway beach by the Gulf Stream each spring. They thought a lot about how plants and animals survive with concrete, and they liked to see in all of this a series of metaphors about resilience. They thought a lot about resilience.

One of them was at this time developing a sort of environmental paranoia that may have been paranoia or may have been rational, as they had lived for so many years on the island in the Pacific—an island with one of the highest concentrations of species death in the world. So they liked to think during this period about how things continue to grow and mutate against all odds, and they found these thoughts a pacifying balm. They liked to think of the stability of the city's buildings and yet how this stability was illusory. Someone had told them that if the humans went away, it would only take one hundred years for the land to become someplace where concrete was not dominant. They liked to think on this. They were not sure how much longer the humans would be around making concrete, and they didn't like to think that concrete had to be there forever after humans were gone. They would rather it was not there at all. But it was there, and so as a result they liked to think about how things might continue on without humans, which seemed to be only a matter of time. As a meditation practice to cope with this paranoia, they would sit in a chair looking out the window at the street. They would sit in a chair and breathe in the concrete and then breathe out an image of grasses and trees growing out of the concrete, breathe in the street and breathe out an image of roots breaking the concrete apart, breathe in the cars and breathe out slowly collapsing neglected freeway overpasses, and with this meditation practice they were convinced all would be well.

Glenn Bach

A whole neighborhood rises up beside me—

camper shell and fishing poles, midnight walking,
 traveling isolated road past leaning stop signs,
 past campers parked, full grain trucks lumbering
 through fields of tiny holes,

a banner billowing above a door, a bike on the road
 as a truck pulls away,

a land that followed its own order and great rules,
 rivers of whales, an island trip, a wink for everyone,
 for all stations in life, a special providence—

by descending order of frequency
 their religious fetishes:

1 *camp*
 29 *campaigner*
 1 *campfire*
 2 *campfires*
 1 *camping*
 1 *camp*s
 2 *hats*
 87 *hast*
 15 *haste*
 4 *hat*
 1 *hatch*

2 *hatched*
1 *sheath*
1 *sheep*
4 *sheering*
1 *sheet*
2 *shell*
3 *shells*
1 *spiral*
2 *series sooner*
7 *tug a turtle*
1 *chock*
1 *jetsam*

—a pair of geese hung from a latticework of stout,
a hunting song, a road song,
people glad to celebrate May Day in the unusual night,
a door covered with hash marks, nymphs that light,
war as the soldiers see it, the dusk appeared
 into view with its blooming filled with so many holes,

road wind moves rustling maps, by expeditions
 and the cautious gleaning,

naked black as a sinker, hook of pearl
 out there just off the shoreline,

movement in nearby branches or rustling leaves,
rustling and hissing in the rubbish,

a few poles stuck in the ground,
clapboard, cedar boughs, and cornstalks,

the barn with its haymow where hens lay eggs,
and,
not afraid of the cold and the snow,
we hid apples to ripen.

INTERVIEW WITH PEARL FRYAR

Introduction by Terrance Hayes

At sixty-six, Pearl Fryar of Bishopville, South Carolina (population 3,670), is one of the nation's leading topiary sculptors and folk artists (neither of these terms do him justice). His work has been displayed at the American Visionary Art Museum in Baltimore, the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston, and the Spoleto Festival in Charleston, South Carolina. It has been featured on the Discovery Channel, HGTV, PBS, and the Sunday Morning show on CBS; in 2006, a documentary about his life and art will premiere at the Sundance Film Festival. That's all to say his stature in the worlds of gardening and Outsider Art has grown rapidly since he first premiered his work in the South Carolina State Museum's exhibition for self-taught artists in 1997. But we're talking about topiaries—things that grow and grow slowly. For years before that first show, Pearl had been planting shrubs and bushes, and directing the tiny trunks and branches with pantyhose, coat hangers, and PVC pipes, often working past midnight after a twelve-hour shift at his job.

Pearl says his family and neighbors were initially concerned for his sanity, but as news of his work spread strangers began to appear—gardeners, art teachers and their students, and museum curators. These days visitors from around the world drop by to tour Pearl's three-acre mutant landscape of intertwined pine trees, bulbous evergreens, and spiraling yews for free. His 150 topiaries, which range from five to thirty feet tall, are shaped in the spirit of Picasso as well as Dr. Seuss, both whimsical and distinctly nonrepresentational. His work has brought attention not only to his block (where his neighbors have cut up their shrubs to attract tourists), but also to Bishopville and its Main Street, where several of his topiaries are on display.

A native of South Carolina and an alumnus of Coker College (where Pearl has been artist-in-residence for the last few years), I am little more than a tourist, if not an exile, arriving at his place for our interview with my family in tow. I left the state more than a decade ago, believing no African American artist could thrive in the South. As Pearl climbs down from his tractor, unmindful of the heat, I'm already dabbing my handkerchief to my brow and fumbling between a new digital recorder and an old tape recorder. My wife has headed off in one direction toward a twenty-foot fish-shaped fir; my five-year-old and two-year-old have gone in another, whispering near a strange-looking water fountain—one of the scrap metal sculptures Pearl calls his “junque art.”

Because he's done a few dozen interviews over the last years, he delivers—almost automatically—the details of his background: his upbringing in Clinton, North Carolina; his retirement after thirty-six years as a maintenance engineer at Rexam Beverage Can Company; the three-minute shrub pruning lesson he received that took him from a simple desire to win Bishopville Yard of the Month twenty years ago into the lecture halls of Harvard art professors. Being a novice interviewer, I'm initially grateful for the details. In truth, though, most of his responses are made to fit into the well-worn narrative of the folk artist. He's not an easy interview. And, in fact, I don't want to interview him—I want to have a conversation. I tell him how my own father was a chemical warfare specialist in the army, just as he was. I talk about how I try to get my poetry students to see art as a lifestyle, not a career. I try to get him to notice what a “good” dad I am with my children by interrupting him to say, “You all okay?” and “What you got there?” And with each such comment, Pearl nods politely before continuing his prepackaged spiel—most of which I won't include here. But he has his surprising moments as well. Pearl will say off-handedly of his work, “They call it art . . . basically, I just cut up plants,” and moments later talk of how he occasionally watches tourists walking through the

garden and then, when they're long gone, retraces their exact route trying to see what they saw.

You can find Pearl's biography (and some great images of his work) on his Web site at www.fryarstopiaries.com; you'll also find it in the forthcoming documentary about his life and work. What follows are snatches of our conversation "beneath" the interview—the paradoxes and mysteries that come up.

Do you think of yourself as a gardener or an artist?

I fall under the category of what they call a self-taught artist. Horticulturalists are constantly saying I shouldn't be able to do this. I'm doing it because I don't know the rules. I do what I want to do according to the way I feel.

Why do you think people respond to the fact that you had "no training"?

Anything you see in a book, someone else has gotten credit for. You're never going to get credit for doing what's in a book, only for what you do a cut above that. That's when the real person comes out.

But talent doesn't necessarily translate into art—one can be talented at a hobby. Back then, were you thinking of your work as a "hobby" or as "art"?

Even today I don't accept it as art—I tell people it's just being creative.

Sounds like you're talking about art that is rooted in instinct or intuition. But you're teaching students now. How do you teach something like intuition?

Once you get them started, they'll quickly develop their own style and technique. My job is to get kids to understand: you determine your own

destiny. Whether you're an A student or D student, you don't back off. You can be gifted in other areas. Testing doesn't measure everything; it doesn't measure the total individual. It's not about SAT scores, it's about what you do well and are willing to work for. You get paid for the amount of work you put into a thing, I don't care what it is. When I was a kid, my family couldn't afford toys. So we made our own toys, and that was being creative. Now I use that same creativeness, and people are paying me for it!

There is a notion of the folk artist as an artist who doesn't care about dollars or professionalism, but you're talking to me about economics, right?

Sometimes we have talent we can't afford. You can be a gifted person, but at some point no matter what you do it becomes economics. Once I came to Bishopville, I had so many years on my job that I was pretty well set for life. Artistically, I knew what I wanted and where I wanted to go, and I had the extra money to put into the plants and equipment in order to get it where it could support itself.

Once you realized the level of recognition, how did your work change?

You know what almost happened to me? This fellow came in and he says, "This is better than Europe." He goes back to Europe and he sends me books, and I almost dropped what I was doing when I saw what they were doing. I almost started doing it, but then I said, "Wait a minute: why should I copy when I'm original?" I put the book down and went back to doing what I do.

Are there other artists you find interesting?

Picasso had a traveling exhibit in Atlanta, and Polly [Polly Laffitte, curator of the South Carolina State Museum] arranged through the museum to get

me tickets—I had friends begging for tickets. I got to see Picasso's work, and it was fascinating. You take art appreciation and know Picasso was a painter, but I was surprised to find out he was also a sculptor. Picasso had one piece that looked like a pig. If it was in the streets I wouldn't even stop to pick it up, but once you say Picasso did it . . . and he had one piece that was nothing but a square and rods. That's all it was!

Is that how you started making your junque art?

For a couple of years afterwards, I thought about the fact that it takes the same creativity to make something with plants as it does to create those metal pieces. I went to the Whitney Museum of Art and saw this piece on the fourth floor—I call it junk art. It was nothing but a rod with a loop that came up—it was a straight rod, and the piece revolved. And when the loop would get to the rod it leaned over and then stood up. It's nothing but a cam—a cam has got a lobe on it, right? You can time that cam so that when the lobe gets to the rod, it will push it over.

I've mentioned Picasso when trying to describe your work to people. Some of the pieces look like cubist sculptures.

I go with my imagination. This piece with the ribs I call my fishbone. This one I call my skeleton look. Flowing lines and curves give you an abstract shape.

Most of them are evergreens, right?

Yeah. I like evergreens because they give you something year-round—that's why this place is such a tourist attraction. In the wintertime everything else is dead, and here you got all the colors and shapes and lines and curves. Also, my background is mathematics. I took creativeness and math. The greatest building in the world starts with a line and a curve.

What about the plants with the flower pots and these metal pieces?

This woman brought her daughter, who is in the eighth grade, over to my place. I showed them a little piece I call my pothead—a pot I made into a chime. I told the daughter it's for people that talk a lot but are empty-headed. Then I said, "You go to school and get an education and eliminate this noise." Three days later, she was back with her friends, and she said, "I want to tell my friends the same thing you told me about this pot." And it's just something simple—a ball pot with a face hanging out of it.

Do you work with sketches?

No, no—I can't work from paper; I don't write anything down. Once you put it on paper the dimension is there—someone else can do it. If someone comes to me and wants me to do something on paper, I don't want to be bothered with it.

So you're not interested in having people imitate your work? You want them to come to you for your ideas, not your formula?

A lot of ideas were stolen. African American art is now accepted as mainstream art, but at one time it was considered outside art. If it was done by a black artist, it had no value. Now we have become mainstream artists—that's why you find so many self-taught artists working.

I can see how that would be very liberating. You're doing what you've always done—except now people are interested in it, intrigued by it.

I was invited to Rock Hill with some other artists. They took all the artists to a Goodwill store and told us we had to make an art piece out of a hat we bought there. I bought a lamp shade, a little green Christmas tree, and some ivy. I spent four dollars. I cut the Christmas tree into topiaries and

wired it to the top of the lampshade, and I wrapped holly around it. Then I took a business card—I needed to know the front from the back—and wrote “A Touch of Class” on it. That night each artist had to wear their piece because it was going to be bid on. This lady saw my hat and said, “I want to model it.” I said, “Sure,” because I didn’t want to do it. She walks by her husband and says, “Buy it.” They got to bidding, and it sold for something like ninety-five dollars. We became good friends—she’s an art collector. Later she took me to her house, and it’s the first thing you see when you walk in her house! She went out and bought this fancy stand and covered it beautifully.

It makes sense that you’re moving into other media. You helped people see that a bush can be more than a bush, just as you showed that woman how a lampshade is more than a lampshade. People want to see the world differently, and your art—all art—gives them a way to do it.

What gets me is a lady who saw the show on me on CBS. When my wife and I come back from church, we always go to the Waffle House—I did a piece for them, and now they let me eat for free. We walk in just as a waitress was explaining to this lady from Florence how to get to my house, and the waitress says: “Here’s the guy!” The lady grabs my hand and starts crying. I don’t know what to say, but I sit there and talk to her—I’m talking about tears, man. She says, “It was just such an inspiration,” and she’s just going and going and I say, “Well, we’re gonna sit down and have a cup of coffee.” She says, “I’m going on to your place, and I’ll be there when you get there.” I couldn’t believe the way she felt, the way she made me feel. She had such appreciation for what I do. That’s what makes me do what I do.

IDENTITY AND SUBJECTIVITY IN POSTINDUSTRIAL MASSACHUSETTS

Lisa Beskin

I am I because I know my little dog
is twitching under his blanket in a dream
that by our account is probably infantile and
savage, but to him is elegant as a minuet
executed at the apex of the Baroque,
when leaves stirring outside the palazzo
mimic the silks worn by contessas,
and the body politic is doused in claret.
Alabaster footmen let fall the sweetmeats,
and lords and ladies descend,
shrieking in their cat-size wigs!

WATER

Gavin Adair

You tied my hands behind my back and rode me into this desert. You
said, I trust you,
but please, I must make this knot tight. And when we got two days in,
you said, Now I must go, would you like me to untie you? I said,
Please, and you pulled me
from my horse, kicked me and rode away. My horse's reins
wrapped around your wrist. It took an hour, I think, or maybe a
whole day,
to untie my hands and rise to follow what was left of your tracks.

After another hour, maybe it was a day, I came upon a family crossing
in a covered wagon.

A mutt lapped water from a tin bowl.

The father said he wasn't supposed to give me anything to drink, said
you'd given me little sips
every hour, that I'd be good another two days.

A girl poked her head out the wagon's canvas cover. The man called to
his wife, Sarah,
don't let her come out.

I looked at my hands, rubbed the red rope marks on my wrists. We
were warned
about you, he said, isn't it time you moved on? I think it's time you
moved on.

ON THE RAILS

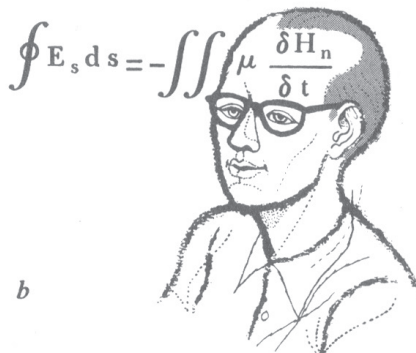
Max Winter

It was on the faster train
on Tuesday, in the middle of the morning,
when I should have been working,
that two men began to talk to each other,
really *talk* to each other,
both turned three-quarters outwards
to me, propped across the aisle,
behind a magazine.
One began to speak,
and then the other spoke in turn,
and it came out
that the older one
had been on the news, earlier that day.
I looked at him carefully,
and I remembered I had seen him, now, today,
that, in fact, he was part of the reason
I was on the train now, rather than earlier,
part of the reason
I was so very late.
The man who was not on the news began
to espouse his view on the vote
and the scattering and the burst,
and the man who had been on the news
listened, smiling and nodding,
every now and then expressing an insight.
The man not-of-the-news would rub the back of one hand
with the palm of the other, nervously.
My eye was drawn to the motion,

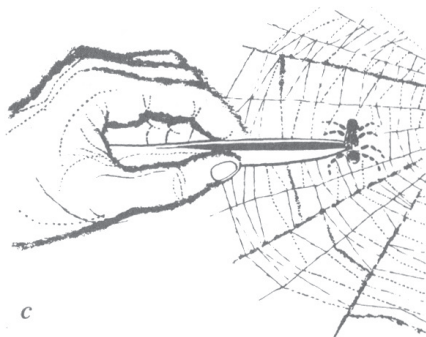
and I began to stare.
One rub, and then another,
as if one hand
were trying to make the other disappear,
as if the man who did not know the news
might want to vanish
at any moment.
And I continued to watch.
And I could see that the news man
was watching as well,
taken by this,
resting his mind.
And then he began to rub his hands as well,
either in sympathy or of an independent spirit
diving for itself
in the middle of the morning,
where I, mouth opened just a little,
had arrived at my stop.
The train pulled, and then paused.
I rose
above them
in the space
of the car.



a



b



c

Figure 12.16. The goals of thought.

FROM THE UNDERSTUDY

Paige Ackerson-Kiely

If you would look at me I would show you something.
The size of it. The size of it, ask any man and it is this big.
I don't really know what interests you, but by watching
the tick of your wrist by your side I could drum up
a thousand doves assured over Palestine, beaks tweaking
it is yours, undoubtedly. What mine. Dovecote. White
woolen snow a shameful cage on the ground. Grass
bent in grief owned by this sharecropper. Knock knock
who's there? The door is a trestle and the water's low.
My love's a gothic push straight out of the University
of Chicago. I should have asked your name. I should
have said your name out loud and answered yes?

THE POTENTIAL OF RAPTURE

I locked up all
of the beautiful things
that might move me.

The bell around a dark ankle
turning and turning.

A stranger smiles.
Her face is no curling-up
in bed.

If I knew the world was going
to end, I'd just run out into
the street and fuck the first
chick I saw, says a
teenage virgin.

Where you go when you are scared

that we might have the verdant
and the humid. Friendly air.
People meaning their handwaves.
An answer is the way you can jump
from a ledge equal to your height
without getting hurt.
Your home.
Every pane of glass
someone laid on their precious
breath. There.
Or there.

Boy I am
leaving too many rooms
for the crowded street. Lay
down your sweet head
for now

to know as we do know
to know. To know
one damn thing.

TO THE UNDERSTUDY

It is true I am afraid of the stranger in men.

On the Internet some woman kneeling
provocatively.

O one of many crickets
I crumpled into toilet paper,
deafening.

Where are the lacy
christening gowns. The babies
leaning headstrong.

Took a walk in my neighborhood
past the church. Touched the
freshly painted siding, my side
that said sit down girlfriend.

Sidle up and let's watch
the traffic like faces for
confirmation.

The night sky that does not
twinkle, the headlights
one

after another

not friendly eyes
averting.

I know I will probably die
with no one
around. I'm not sick or
anything

like that—
there they go. There they go again.

THE LETTER OF LORD CHANDOS

Hugo von Hofmannsthal

This is the letter Philip, Lord Chandos, younger son of the Earl of Bath, wrote to Francis Bacon, later Baron Verulam, Viscount St. Albans, apologizing for his complete abandonment of literary activity.

It is kind of you, my esteemed friend, to condone my two years of silence and to write to me thus. It is more than kind of you to give to your solicitude about me, to your perplexity at what appears to you as mental stagnation, the expression of lightness and jest which only great men, convinced of the perilousness of life yet not discouraged by it, can master.

You conclude with the aphorism of Hippocrates, “Qui gravi morbo correpti dolores non sentiunt, iis mens aegrotat” (Those who do not perceive that they are wasted by serious illness are sick in mind), and suggest that I am in need of medicine not only to conquer my malady, but even more, to sharpen my senses for the condition of my inner self. I would fain give you an answer such as you deserve, fain reveal myself to you entirely, but I do not know how to set about it. Hardly do I know whether I am still the same person to whom your precious letter is addressed. Was it I who, now six-and-twenty, at nineteen wrote *The New Paris*, *The Dream of Daphne*, *Epithalamium*, those pastorals reeling under the splendour of their words—plays which a divine Queen and several overindulgent lords and gentlemen are gracious enough still to remember? And again, was it I who, at three-and-twenty, beneath the stone arcades of the great Venetian piazza, found in myself that structure of Latin prose whose plan and order delighted me more than did the monuments of Palladio and Sansovino rising out of the sea? And could I, if otherwise I am still the same person, have lost from my inner inscrutable self all traces and scars of this creation of my most intensive thinking—lost them so

completely that in your letter now lying before me the title of my short treatise stares at me strange and cold? I could not even comprehend, at first, what the familiar picture meant, but had to study it word by word, as though these Latin terms thus strung together were meeting my eye for the first time. But I am, after all, that person, and there is rhetoric in these questions—rhetoric which is good for women or for the House of Commons, whose power, however, so overrated by our time, is not sufficient to penetrate into the core of things. But it is my inner self that I feel bound to reveal to you—a peculiarity, a vice, a disease of my mind, if you like—if you are to understand that an abyss equally unbridgeable separates me from the literary works lying seemingly ahead of me as from those behind me: the latter having become so strange to me that I hesitate to call them my property.

I know not whether to admire more the urgency of your benevolence or the unbelievable sharpness of your memory, when you recall to me the various little projects I entertained during those days of rare enthusiasm which we shared together. True, I did plan to describe the first years of the reign of our glorious sovereign, the late Henry VIII. The papers bequeathed to me by my grandfather, the Duke of Exeter, concerning his negotiations with France and Portugal, offered me some foundation. And out of Sallust, in those happy, stimulating days, there flowed into me as though through never-congested conduits the realization of form—that deep, true, inner form which can be sensed only beyond the domain of rhetorical tricks: that form of which one can no longer say that it organizes subject-matter, for it penetrates it, dissolves it, creating at once both dream and reality, an interplay of eternal forces, something as marvelous as music or algebra. This was my most treasured plan.

But what is man that he should make plans!

I also toyed with other schemes. These, too, your kind letter conjures

up. Each one, bloated with a drop of my blood, dances before me like a weary gnat against a somber wall whereon the bright sun of halcyon days no longer lies.

I wanted to decipher the fables, the mythical tales bequeathed to us by the Ancients, in which painters and sculptors found an endless and thoughtless pleasure—decipher them as the hieroglyphs of a secret, inexhaustible wisdom whose breath I sometimes seemed to feel as though from behind a veil.

I well remember this plan. It was founded on I know not what sensual and spiritual desire: as the hunted hart craves water, so I craved to enter these naked, glistening bodies, these sirens and dryads, this Narcissus and Proteus, Perseus and Actaeon. I longed to disappear in them and talk out of them with tongues. And I longed for more. I planned to start an *Apophthegmata*, like that composed by Julius Caesar: you will remember that Cicero mentions it in a letter. In it I thought of setting side by side the most memorable sayings which—while associating with the learned men and witty women of our time, with unusual people from among the simple folk or with erudite and distinguished personages—I had managed to collect during my travels. With these I meant to combine the brilliant maxims and reflections from classical and Italian works, and anything else of intellectual adornment that appealed to me in books, in manuscripts or conversations; the arrangement, moreover, of particularly beautiful festivals and pageants, strange crimes and cases of madness, descriptions of the greatest and most characteristic architectural monuments in the Netherlands, in France and Italy; and many other things. The whole work was to have been entitled *Nosce te ipsum*.

To sum up: In those days I, in a state of continuous intoxication, conceived the whole of existence as one great unit: the spiritual and physical worlds seemed to form no contrast, as little as did courtly and bestial conduct, art

and barbarism, solitude and society; in everything I felt the presence of Nature, in the aberrations of insanity as much as in the utmost refinement of the Spanish ceremonial; in the boorishness of young peasants no less than in the most delicate of allegories; and in all expressions of Nature I felt myself. When in my hunting lodge I drank the warm foaming milk which an unkempt wench had drained into a wooden pail from the udder of a beautiful gentle-eyed cow, the sensation was no different from that which I experienced when, seated on a bench built into the window of my study, my mind absorbed the sweet and foaming nourishment from a book. The one was like the other: neither was superior to the other, whether in dreamlike celestial quality or in physical intensity—and thus it prevailed through the whole expanse of life in all directions; everywhere I was in the center of it, never suspecting mere appearance: at other times I divined that all was allegory and that each creature was a key to all the others; and I felt myself the one capable of seizing each by the handle and unlocking as many of the others as were ready to yield. This explains the title which I had intended to give to this encyclopedic book.

To a person susceptible to such ideas, it might appear a well-designed plan of divine Providence that my mind should fall from such a state of inflated arrogance into this extreme of despondency and feebleness which is now the permanent condition of my inner self. Such religious ideas, however, have no power over me: they belong to the cobwebs through which my thoughts dart out into the void, while the thoughts of so many others are caught there and come to rest. To me the mysteries of faith have been condensed into a lofty allegory which arches itself over the fields of my life like a radiant rainbow, ever remote, ever prepared to recede should it occur to me to rush toward it and wrap myself into the folds of its mantle.

But, my dear friend, worldly ideas also evade me in a like manner. How shall I try to describe to you these strange spiritual torments, this rebounding of the fruit-branches above my outstretched hands, this recession of the murmuring stream from my thirsting lips?

My case, in short, is this: I have lost completely the ability to think or to speak of anything coherently.

At first I grew by degrees incapable of discussing a loftier or more general subject in terms of which everyone, fluently and without hesitation, is wont to avail himself. I experienced an inexplicable distaste for so much as uttering the words *spirit*, *soul*, or *body*. I found it impossible to express an opinion on the affairs at Court, the events in Parliament, or whatever you wish. This was not motivated by any form of personal deference (for you know that my candor borders on imprudence), but because the abstract terms of which the tongue must avail itself as a matter of course in order to voice a judgment—these terms crumbled in my mouth like moldy fungi. Thus, one day, while reprimanding my four-year-old daughter, Katherina Pompilia, for a childish lie of which she had been guilty and demonstrating to her the necessity of always being truthful, the ideas streaming into my mind suddenly took on such iridescent coloring, so flowed over into one another, that I reeled off the sentence as best I could, as if suddenly overcome by illness. Actually, I did feel myself growing pale, and with a violent pressure on my forehead I left the child to herself, slammed the door behind me, and began to recover to some extent only after a brief gallop over the lonely pasture.

Gradually, however, these attacks of anguish spread like a corroding rust. Even in familiar and humdrum conversation all the opinions which are generally expressed with ease and sleep-walking assurance became so doubtful that I had to cease altogether taking part in such talk. It filled me with an inexplicable anger, which I could conceal only with effort, to hear such things as: This affair has turned out well or ill for this or that person; Sheriff N. is a bad, Parson T. a good man; Farmer M. is to be pitied, his sons are wasters; another is to be envied because his daughters are thrifty; one family is rising in the world, another is on the downward path. All this seemed as indemonstrable, as mendacious and hollow as

could be. My mind compelled me to view all things occurring in such conversations from an uncanny closeness. As once, through a magnifying glass, I had seen a piece of skin on my little finger look like a field full of holes and furrows, so I now perceived human beings and their actions. I no longer succeeded in comprehending them with the simplifying eye of habit. For me everything disintegrated into parts, those parts again into parts; no longer would anything let itself be encompassed by one idea. Single words floated round me; they congealed into eyes which stared at me and into which I was forced to stare back—whirlpools which gave me vertigo and, reeling incessantly, led into the void.

I tried to rescue myself from this plight by seeking refuge in the spiritual world of the Ancients. Plato I avoided, for I dreaded the perilousness of his imagination. Of them all, I intended to concentrate on Seneca and Cicero. Through the harmony of their clearly defined and orderly ideas I hoped to regain my health. But I was unable to find my way to them. These ideas, I understood them well: I saw their wonderful interplay rise before me like magnificent fountains upon which played golden balls. I could hover around them and watch how they played, one with the other; but they were concerned only with each other, and the most profound, most personal quality of my thinking remained excluded from this magic circle. In their company I was overcome by a terrible sense of loneliness; I felt like someone locked in a garden surrounded by eyeless statues. So once more I escaped into the open.

Since that time I have been leading an existence which I fear you can hardly imagine, so lacking in spirit and thought is its flow: an existence which, it is true, differs little from that of my neighbours, my relations, and most of the land-owning nobility of this kingdom, and which is not utterly bereft of gay and stimulating moments. It is not easy for me to indicate wherein these good moments subsist; once again words desert me. For it is, indeed, something entirely unnamed, even barely nameable

which, at such moments, reveals itself to me, filling like a vessel any casual object of my daily surroundings with an overflowing flood of higher life. I cannot expect you to understand me without examples, and I must plead your indulgence for their absurdity. A pitcher, a harrow abandoned in a field, a dog in the sun, a neglected cemetery, a cripple, a peasant's hut—all these can become the vessel of my revelation. Each of these objects and a thousand others similar, over which the eye usually glides with a natural indifference, can suddenly, at any moment (which I am utterly powerless to evoke), assume for me a character so exalted and moving that words seem too poor to describe it. Even the distinct image of an absent object, in fact, can acquire the mysterious function of being filled to the brim with this silent but suddenly rising flood of divine sensation. Recently, for instance, I had given the order for a copious supply of rat-poison to be scattered in the milk cellars of one of my dairy-farms. Towards evening I had gone off for a ride and, as you can imagine, thought no more about it. As I was trotting along over the freshly-ploughed land, nothing more alarming in sight than a scared covey of quail and, in the distance, the great sun sinking over the undulating fields, there suddenly loomed up before me the vision of that cellar, resounding with the death-struggle of a mob of rats. I felt everything within me: the cool, musty air of the cellar filled with the sweet and pungent reek of poison, and the yelling of the death cries breaking against the moldering walls; the vain convulsions of those convoluted bodies as they tear about in confusion and despair; their frenzied search for escape, and the grimace of icy rage when a couple collide with one another at a blocked-up crevice. But why seek again for words which I have forsworn! You remember, my friend, the wonderful description in Livy of the hours preceding the destruction of Alba Longa: when the crowds stray aimlessly through the streets which they are to see no more . . . when they bid farewell to the stones beneath their feet. I assure you, my friend, I carried this vision within me, and the vision of burning Carthage, too; but there was more, something more divine, more bestial; and it was the Present, the fullest, most exalted Present. There

was a mother, surrounded by her young in their agony of death; but her gaze was cast neither toward the dying nor upon the merciless walls of stone, but into the void, or through the void into Infinity, accompanying this gaze with a gnashing of teeth!—A slave struck with helpless terror standing near the petrifying Niobe must have experienced what I experienced when, within me, the soul of this animal bared its teeth to its monstrous fate.

Forgive this description, but do not think that it was pity I felt. For if you did, my example would have been poorly chosen. It was far more and far less than pity: an immense sympathy, a flowing over into these creatures, or a feeling that an aura of life and death, of dream and wakefulness, had flowed for a moment into them—but whence? For what had it to do with pity, or with any comprehensible concatenation of human thought when, on another evening, on finding beneath a nut-tree a half-filled pitcher which a gardener boy had left there, and the pitcher and the water in it, darkened by the shadow of the tree, and a beetle swimming on the surface from shore to shore—when this combination of trifles sent through me such a shudder at the presence of the Infinite, a shudder running from the roots of my hair to the marrow of my heels? What was it that made me want to break into words which, I know, were I to find them, would force to their knees those cherubim in whom I do not believe? What made me turn silently away from this place? Even now, after weeks, catching sight of that nut-tree, I pass it by with a shy sidelong glance, for I am loath to dispel the memory of the miracle hovering there round the trunk, loath to scare away the celestial shudders that still linger about the shrubbery in this neighborhood! In these moments an insignificant creature—a dog, a rat, a beetle, a crippled apple tree, a lane winding over the hill, a moss-covered stone, mean more to me than the most beautiful, abandoned mistress of the happiest night. These mute and, on occasion, inanimate creatures rise toward me with such an abundance, such a presence

of love, that my enchanted eye can find nothing in sight void of life. Everything that exists, everything I can remember, everything touched upon by my confused thoughts, has a meaning. Even my own heaviness, the general torpor of my brain, seems to acquire a meaning; I experience in and around me a blissful, never-ending interplay, and among the objects playing against one another there is not one into which I cannot flow. To me, then, it is as though my body consists of nought but ciphers which give me the key to everything; or as if we could enter into a new and hopeful relationship with the whole of existence if only we begin to think with the heart. As soon, however, as this strange enchantment falls from me, I find myself confused; wherein this harmony transcending me and the entire world consisted, and how it made itself known to me, I could present in sensible words as little as I could say anything precise about the inner movements of my intestines or a congestion of my blood.

Apart from these strange occurrences, which, incidentally, I hardly know whether to ascribe to the mind or the body, I live a life of barely believable vacuity, and have difficulties in concealing from my wife this inner stagnation, and from my servants the indifference wherewith I contemplate the affairs of my estates. The good and strict education which I owe to my late father and the early habit of leaving no hour of the day unused are the only things, it seems to me, which help me maintain towards the outer world the stability and the dignified appearance appropriate to my class and my person.

I am rebuilding a wing of my house and am capable of conversing occasionally with the architect concerning the progress of his work; I administer my estates, and my tenants and employees may find me, perhaps, somewhat more taciturn but no less benevolent than of yore. None of them, standing with doffed cap before the door of his house while I ride by of an evening, will have any idea that my glance, which

he is wont respectfully to catch, glides with longing over the rickety boards under which he searches for earthworms for fishing-bait; that it plunges through the latticed window into the stuffy chamber where, in a corner, the low bed with its chequered linen seems forever to be waiting for someone to die or another to be born; that my eye lingers long upon the ugly puppies or upon a cat stealing stealthily among the flower-pots; and that it seeks among all the poor and clumsy objects of a peasant's life for the one whose insignificant form, whose unnoticed being, whose mute existence, can become the source of that mysterious, wordless, and boundless ecstasy. For my unnamed blissful feeling is sooner brought about by a distant lonely shepherd's fire than by the vision of a starry sky, sooner by the chirping of the last dying cricket when the autumn wind chases wintry clouds across the deserted fields than by the majestic booming of an organ. And in my mind I compare myself from time to time with the orator Crassus, of whom it is reported that he grew so excessively enamoured of a tame lamprey—a dumb, apathetic, red-eyed fish in his ornamental pond—that it became the talk of the town; and when one day in the Senate Domitius reproached him for having shed tears over the death of this fish, attempting thereby to make him appear a fool, Crassus answered, "Thus have I done over the death of my fish as you have over the death of neither your first nor your second wife."

I know not how oft this Crassus with his lamprey enters my mind as a mirrored image of my Self, reflected across the abyss of centuries. But not on account of the answer he gave Domitius. The answer brought the laughs on his side, and the whole affair turned into a jest. I, however, am deeply affected by the affair, which would have remained the same even had Domitius shed bitter tears of sorrow over his wives. For there would still have been Crassus, shedding tears over his lamprey. And about this figure, utterly ridiculous and contemptible in the midst of a world-governing senate discussing the most serious subjects, I feel compelled by a

mysterious power to reflect in a manner which, the moment I attempt to express it in words, strikes me as supremely foolish.

Now and then at night the image of this Crassus is in my brain, like a splinter round which everything festers, throbs, and boils. It is then that I feel as though I myself were about to ferment, to effervesce, to foam and to sparkle. And the whole thing is a kind of feverish thinking, but thinking in a medium more immediate, more liquid, more glowing than words. It, too, forms whirlpools, but of a sort that do not seem to lead, as the whirlpools of language, into the abyss, but into myself and into the deepest womb of peace.

I have troubled you excessively, my dear friend, with this extended description of an inexplicable condition which is wont, as a rule, to remain locked up in me.

You were kind enough to express your dissatisfaction that no book written by me reaches you any more, "to compensate for the loss of our relationship." Reading that, I felt, with a certainty not entirely bereft of a feeling of sorrow, that neither in the coming year nor in the following nor in all the years of this my life shall I write a book, whether in English or in Latin: and this for an odd and embarrassing reason which I must leave to the boundless superiority of your mind to place in the realm of physical and spiritual values spread out harmoniously before your unprejudiced eye: to wit, because the language in which I might be able not only to write but to think is neither Latin nor English, neither Italian nor Spanish, but a language none of whose words is known to me, a language in which inanimate things speak to me and wherein I may one day have to justify myself before an unknown judge.

Fain had I the power to compress in this, presumably my last, letter to Francis Bacon all the love and gratitude, all the unmeasured admiration,

which I harbour in my heart for the greatest benefactor of my mind, for the foremost Englishman of my day, and which I shall harbour therein until death break it asunder.

This 22 August, A.D. 1603

PHI. CHANDOS

Translated from the German by Tania and James Stern.

from LETTERS TO MICHAEL

Mark McMorris

DEAR HORATIUS (DEAR MICHAEL) (7)

The time of light comes back, the vapor
from water that makes the throne
comes after the light, and the book
is empty until it is not a book at all
but a garden of exquisite statues.
The throne rises out of the garden.
The garden flows to the delta, rapid.
The corpses sleep with their lovers
bodiless, thin as the water vapor
blown through stellar gases, hot
cores of constellations that falter
silent and catastrophic and with-
out meaning. These too must perish,
Horatius, the strong man and the pimp
anemone mimesis market
the crystal threads of your beloved
the crystal meanings that give delight
and hurt not: their fate is certain.
Wax tablets draw near to a furnace.
But if all of it will go away to air
was it for this that they dug pits
all those rows of year after year?
Was it for this that father crawled
out of a dungeon, a mother lost sons
and daughters fell from aeroplanes?

Wax tablets draw near to a furnace.
Does the poem vanish or does it yet
move on the back of a sphere, the words
you wrote and that I harbor in heart?
When God made the Pen and wrote
the world, did he first write the day
or the dawn, the throne or the water
it sits on; did he make the sky pale
from paper, and did the throne
always rise on the seabed, beautiful?
One day the trash compactor
will fold together like a prayer book
the wax flower and the harvest
will come to grief, the bedraggled men
caked in dirt from digging the pits
the script doctor who writes on wax
her bevel and thumbprint, the famous
syllabaries found at Knossos and paper
airplanes and kites hoisted at passages.
The throne was made before the day
and day before the water and the sun.
The light threads ropes among the trees
in a forest. Ropes of light and again
and again the light over a table
falls, and tumbles, and falls, and again
the wax melts before it is complete.

PRIVATOPIA

Robert Fitterman

Origins changed
into a black V-neck
sweater from Banana
Republic well those

drifter Timberland
days are past me now
I've got so much more
to think about deadlines

and commitments
Ocean Pacific nights
what to leave in rapid
confusing growth as

the detached house in
its suburban garden
I hate when I get a
catalogue and then I'm

forced multiple auto
ownership regulating
piazzas locally known
as porches I bought this

last summer pause for
the mosquitoes in my
yard Paradise breeze
I decided Dangerden

to carpet my stair Dewalt
I knew the prices out there
and I think I scored TCBY
I am crying because I just

bought Hope Intense Coach
I know there's no such
thing as a best Crock-Pot
if they have Cinnabon

we usually stop there
I had to exchange Gerber
a visor apparently my head
is not a small-medium

There's a cotton shortage
or something Atomlab I did
not even want the jeans
I bought I bought them just

because there's a Western
Digital there's a better life
Infiniti and you think about it
don't you these are our 4

fav places to find designer
labels One Star it's all Creative
Labs brand new but it was all
a big disappointment when

I got home the certificate
showed up a week after

I bought my new sunglasses
Lite-On you like pink don't you

I got a raspberry pink leather
hobo bag because I need some
color in my life Hefty it wasn't
in stores so that let me down

I'D LOVE TO TAKE ORDERS FROM YOU

The musical score is written for piano and voice. It features a key signature of one sharp (F#) and a 4/4 time signature. The piano accompaniment includes a melodic line in the right hand and a harmonic line in the left hand, often using chords. The lyrics are written below the vocal line, with some words in parentheses indicating optional or alternative phrasing. The score is divided into four systems, each with a vocal line and a piano accompaniment. The first system shows the piano introduction. The second system begins with the lyrics. The third system continues the lyrics. The fourth system concludes the piece with a final chord and a fermata.

p

p

f

D A7/E D7/F# G D/A

Today, I'd have to add a - nother re - source to the list. First, I'd like to thank you for pro - ducing
That's like asking if there are on - ly five people who have gi - ven the orders for these ter - rible

C D A7/E D7/F# G

such a great site, and taking care of the order so eas - i - ly. Ever - y - body here is taking or - ders from the top down ____
at - ro - cit - i - es. If enough people call, they'll take order - s ____ I'd love to do the whole thing

D/A C D D

I'm in love with my sweat - er but I need to know how long in - ter - nation - al ship - ping or - ders take.
but sec - ing how un - u - sual these orders are, I'd have to re - consider ____

ADDITIONAL LYRICS

3.

How is the fundraising process coming along
you ask? Money is never the question
in these situations. Hi, I'd like to extend a warm
welcome to you and the folks in your department.
I'd love to pass this stuff out for free if I could—
I'll take cash, cashier's check, check, or money order.
The surfers I'd want to talk to right now
would not be capable of small talk.

4.

You owe it to yourself to take the time
with this compassionate guide to self-love
and acceptance. Everyone here is taking orders
from the top down. Please respect my work
and do not take it. The *seeing is believing* thing
doesn't really work here because there are plenty of us
working out there silently. He said I'd get paid for this,
but I still have not seen one penny.

GIRLFRIEND OF THE WHIRLING DERVISH

The girl was hos - pit - al - i - zed after being put in a wash - ing mach - ine

What does she need with the old stories? She's a modern girl in love

a demon a whirling der - vish of wonder, a girl gone whi - te! It's the image

of a young wo - man who o - ver ident - i - fied with her friend's mil - i - tary ser - vice

Guitar Chords: D, D/C, G/B, Dm/A, E7, Am, Cm, G/B, Em, Am, Dsus, D

ADDITIONAL LYRICS

2.

One ride on this wild, magical toy
and you'll never be wanting a man again.
Just slip this dancer between your thighs
and hold on! Why do you think they call it
a *Whirling Dervish*? Today I am a whirling
dervish of joy and beauty. Hop on board,
my friend, I'm the mixed up boy-girl
who splashes all the way through this
space ship and turns the man inside into
a singing whirling dervish.

3.

I have a good friend in Kansas City,
Missouri, but her friend talks bullshit and
enunciates like some kinda fancy college girl.
He glared mournfully at his friend:
we just lost the best waitress in the business.
And then she burst back into the barn,
like a tiny whirling dervish.
At one point I saw my friend spinning like
a whirling dervish and my other friend summed it up
as adrenaline, endorphins, Heinekens.

PERMANENCE TEMPERANCE FRAUD

Sam White

State what you've seen
or risk the vast crumpled ball
you flaked from torn suit jacket
staggering manner oh forget it
I don't ever really see water
I see dented platters platters
shifting and free with their dents
and a strange curse delivers
us all a fruited banquet
for what has vanished witness
the spinnaker and how
it batters us with color yesterday
everything whirling the boatyard
whirling leaves like an urn
whirls hunters after a boar
but clutches only stems to its center
oh forget it it's a long journey
under the heading of fire

CHRONIQUETTES

Raymond Roussel

I

Do you mind explaining to me why I always confuse Mr. Turbot with Tricot?

They do not resemble one another that much; do you think they resemble one another that much?

As for their names, there is obviously something, but frankly, there are thirty-six names as closely related as these two.

Yet, I could never lodge in my mind who was Mr. Turbot and who was Tricot.

It's very bothersome, because I don't know Mr. Turbot personally, and it happens that I sometimes greet him as Tricot, which never fails to bewilder him.

Like the other evening, I didn't say hello to Tricot, convinced that it was Mr. Turbot. It's exasperating. Furthermore, my talent for mixing things up is astonishing. I remember having maintained for an hour before fifteen people that white pearls (*perles*) were more rare than black pearls. Naturally, everybody mocked me, but I wouldn't give in.

I confused them with blackbirds (*merles*).

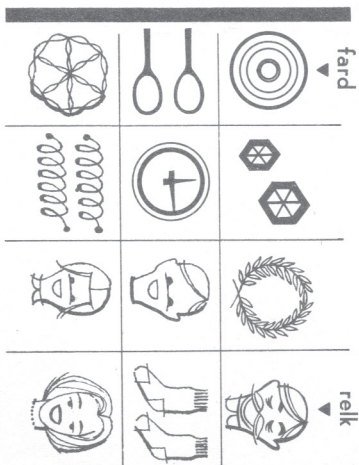
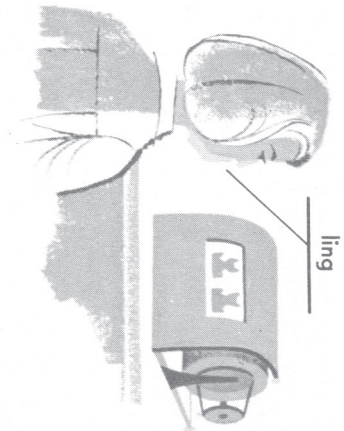
II

In those days I was madly in love with Rose. It was in the countryside; she ran a dairy (*crèmerie*) in the village; ah! I got my cream there; it was a pretext, you know, for visiting her. She was blond and fresh, with her sleeves always rolled up to her elbows; those arms . . . I was mad about them. And oh how the dairy was lovely! In front there was a little garden, so that one first opened the small gate of a picket fence, then took a few steps on the gravel before entering. Ah! That little garden . . . let me tell you what that garden was like . . . no, let me tell you . . . Abounding with hollyhocks (*roses trémières*); hollyhocks everywhere; one only saw hollyhocks upon entering.

Up to the shop's facade, where was written:

ROSE DAIRYWOMAN (CRÉMIÈRE)

Translated from the French by Ethan Spigland.



WHEREWITHOUT

Mark Bibbins

I'm sunk within
a blank; you're tanking,

temperamental, though
everything peeled reveals

a tottering joy. Dollop
of no more, upping

the anterior: we're off
to the theoretical zoo.

Ever have I loved
our alibi—miscreants

hear it and swoon. The pen
tip hides in a lucite night

as its pigment skitters
and smothers the day.

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANCK ANDRÉ JAMME

Franck André Jammé lives and works in Paris and North Burgundy, France. He has published fourteen volumes of poetry and fragments, as well as numerous limited editions illustrated by artists such as Zao Wou-Ki, Achary Vyakui, Jan Voss, and Jaume Plensa. His poetry is included in *The New French Poetry* (Bloodaxe Books, 1996) and *The Yale Book of French Poetry* (Yale University Press, 2004). In 2005 he was awarded the Grand Prix de Poésie de la Société des Gens de Lettres for his life's work. Black Square editions has published two of his books in English: *The Recitation of Forgetting* (translated by John Ashbery) and *Extracts from the Life of a Beetle* (translated by Michael Tweed). Two more of Jammé's books, *New Exercises* and *Another Silent Attack*, will be published in English in 2006. He has translated works by John Ashbery, Lokenath Bhattacharya, and Udayan Vajpeyi into French. He is also an independent curator focusing on contemporary Indian art, especially tantric, brut, and tribal works. In 2005, the Drawing Center published *Field of Color: Tantra Drawings from India*, in conjunction with the exhibition Jammé curated. Jen Bervin and Christian Hawkey interviewed Franck André Jammé in October 2005, in New York, and edited the interview collaboratively with Robert Casper.

How did you first get your start as a poet?

I began to write when I was young, and two or three years later (I was then twenty years old) I discovered that what I had done was barely nothing. I had written two books, not very big, but two real books. I had even published extracts of them, under a pseudonym, in a new magazine at Gallimard's. Well, you know, you are young, you are quite talented—I can say that because I have no special reverence for talent. The work was contemporary and free and a bit mad, sometimes with columns and quota-

tions and short lines of music and little drawings. It was just a gifted and clever and funny little formal game. But I think I already knew secretly that they were not so interesting. And when I discovered it, well, I became really sick. *[laughter]* No, this is true. Psychologically, I was very sick. A severe nervous breakdown—hospital, heavy medical treatment. It lasted at least three years. Horrible.

What followed that period?

I stopped writing. I couldn't do it; I couldn't go in there anymore. I became a music journalist specializing in contemporary jazz.

And when I was something like thirty or thirty-two, I began to write again. Very suddenly. I had a nice old friend who came over to my place for very simple dinners. Usually she came with a bottle of wine, but that day she couldn't find any—I don't know why. I was living in the Fifth in Paris; the river was on her route. On a special bank of the river there are many pet shops, so passing by she bought a little aquarium, a small round one, and a fish in a little bag of water. She said to me, "Well, I didn't find wine, but I found this if you like it." We had our dinner, and the following morning I found this very strange item. It was a beautiful Siamese fighting fish with something like eight wings, and it would fly in the water. I wrote something during the day, a sort of suite—not very long, but sweet and in prose. I called it "Flame in Water" and sent it to René Char, whom I didn't know at all. He liked it and helped me publish it. Somebody in Paris made a chapbook of it, and special copies featured engravings by a well-known painter: Zao Wou-Ki, a friend of Char.

After this I never stopped. But I can spend one year without writing a line. I'm not an everyday writer. Even when I tried to do it—because we do get a bit crazy—when I said to myself, "Now you must wake up every morning at seven and do two hours of writing," its result was always bad.

Do you ever feel haunted by the years you weren't able to write poems? Like it will come back somehow?

Rarely. From time to time, yes, on bad days, blue days. But I don't think . . . no, it's too late now. I presume that with the long silence, I paid my tribute. To what? I don't know.

Do you still have that fish?

No. She died quite tragically some months after the book was published. They don't have so long a life. Well, things wear down. It was perhaps the fact of printing "Flame in Water" that really signed the page. I didn't need another fish.

What is your writing process like? Do you revise?

First it's quite rapid. The less I control, the better it is. I'm used to doing things quickly. And afterward, I have a look and I correct, but not that much. There is even a short book I wrote in nine hours, a complete night. It's called *Un diamant sans étonnement*, which translates as *A Flawless Diamond*. However the title in French is *Un diamant sans étonnement* (astonishment). This last word is from the peculiar language of jewelers: *astonishment* in French means a fault, a mistake in the stone. But it also means astonishment, which is beautiful. I would like to find a little word in English that captures these meanings—I don't like *flawless* so much. If you know some old jewelers . . . I wrote this book with a sensation—of course, it was not true—that I myself was not writing. It is a woman who speaks and even tells things that I couldn't say myself. It's extremely feminine and totally open—which I'm not, unfortunately.

Another book, *The Recitation of Forgetting*, came about because I had a bus accident in India. I came back home and wrote *Recitation* in my

bed, where I had to stay for many months. I would sleep for three hours and be awake for three hours. I asked for little pieces of paper, and very often when I awoke I noted little things down. The book came like that. You can't do that often—I mean, you can't have an accident every year, thank God!

How did your work come to be translated into English?

It began in England. I had a close friend at Trinity College in Cambridge, David Kelley, who translated *Moon Wood*. After that, it all happened in America. A young translator, Michael Tweed, worked on *Another Silent Attack*, *Extracts from the Life of Beetles*, and *A Flawless Diamond*; Mary Ann Caws on *Proliferation of Breaches and Obstacles*; Charles Borkhuis on *New Exercises*. And five or six years ago I gave a reading at Bard College. John Ashbery was there. Afterward we had a great dinner together, and at the end of the dinner he told me in French (in fact, the entire dinner had been in French), "I'd like very much to translate something." I sent him a short book, *The Recitation of Forgetting*. He did it quickly, and he sent me in turn a ton of his books. I wanted to return his generosity, and suddenly in one of the books I saw, *Three Poems* . . . I read the beginning, and I found it incredibly beautiful. So I wrote him and said could I try to translate it, and he said, "Yes, go ahead." But this book is so difficult to translate. I'm taking my time, but I will do it. Fortunately—and this is extremely important when you translate—I am in contact with the author so he can have a look and correct. This book is particularly difficult to translate because it has an enigmatic flow, like breathing. You must find the good sound. You have to swim in the water of the poem you're translating.

There is in your work a willingness to enlarge and magnify perception to include many different layers of consciousness, or a larger sense of consciousness, but at the same time there is a real respect for organisms, for particulars, for

everything that is not human consciousness. Part of the pleasure of your poems is to feel multiple worlds brushing up against each other; finally, no one world is privileged over another.

The respect and the reverence for everything is total. But all of this is going through the filter of your perception. We don't always stop to describe the strange connections and movements and dances that appear in our minds.

At some level it's a reverence for perception, and to acknowledge this is to further respect what's being observed.

Yes, but if you just have the respect and the reverence for the thing without the free, open, frank filter of perception, art quickly becomes a bit dry. This filter is incredible, isn't it? When you hear, for example, John Coltrane, or when you read Rimbaud.

Has Henri Michaux been an influence on your work?

What I would call a real influence is something visible in the work, and I don't see Michaux's presence in this way in my own work. More than an influence I have a kind of an operative admiration for Michaux and his fairly magical thought. I like his way of changing styles from one book to another. He constantly clouds the issue. I knew him a bit; he was rather mysterious and fascinating. And also, he was an artist.

What writers have influenced you in a more invisible way?

When I think about Lewis Carroll I immediately feel better. *[laughs]* You know, they are so many: Nietzsche, Montaigne, Borges, Scutenaire, Porchia, Heraclitus, Bashō, and Chuang Tzu. I forget now so many other ones. So there are texts like that, books like that, which help you, in a

totally tangible way, to live—and of course, if you are a writer, to write. But first of all to live.

You've mentioned René Char before—when you were younger you were his assistant. Did this experience shape your work at all?

Oh, I just helped Char edit his complete works, choose the variants. He didn't want to have some big professor do it; he preferred to have a young poet assist him in this task. He was very generous, quite unpredictable, sometimes unfair. I admired him of course, but I was not really a fan because there were two René Chars. One was a bit aphoristic, mysterious and clear at the same time. I loved this one. But there was another Char, one who was a bit baroque and used too many adjectives and complicated his lines. Some texts were totally great. But some of them—well, I didn't like them so much. But we were friends. Perhaps you don't need to like all the work of somebody in order to be his friend and to work with him.

What, in your mind, is particularly French about your work?

In French literature there has always been this adherence to a kind of speculative rhetoric. I am not a philosopher, because I have no system to build, nor any rejection of system to develop. But I have an inclination for thinking which is a bit French.

Your books, even in sections, are typically written as one continuous poem. Why do you choose this?

I like to really compose a book, count a book like an exhibition, or a long piece of music with a beginning and an end. It is not at all a fiction but in fact a kind of mind story, you know, and you can't change the order of things. I like to read a book and not a collection of poems. It's not that I discourage that, but it is my soft corner, my preference, my "favorite thing."

I noticed American poetry books, even if they are excellent, keep the old habit of discrete poems. Even the young poets do it. You write one poem, the second one, the third one, the fourth one. Well, one is like this, one is in prose, one is, etc. And when you have sixty pieces, okay, it's a book—you put on a title, and it goes to the publisher. So many people in France do the same. It is not the subtle solution for publishing a book.

Does it have to do with duration or time?

Mainly with time. Time is the king. But with space, too. Because before I write a book I like to see the general face, the profile of the thing, the silhouette, even if I don't know what I am going to put inside.

Your poems encompass so many voices, particularly female voices.

I think there have always been female characters, female presences in my books. It came naturally. I couldn't think about an existence, and about an activity in this existence, without these presences. So generous, so unpredictable, so moving, enigmatic. Near the unknowable root of things, near the beginning, if you prefer. It's funny—I use the same words as Char, who was sort of macho [*laughs*]. It also introduces a kind of dialogue in the pages. Between a man and a woman. Between me and a woman. Between me and me, perhaps. I don't know. I like that, too, because poems can be very solitary. You have the page and you yourself write something—why not create a kind of conversation with a character, with yourself, with the reader? In my last book, *Extract from the Life of Beetles*, there is a dialogue between two friends. One of them is certainly younger—or if he's not younger he's less experienced—than the other. He is not the one ruling the situation, but he is trying to understand it a bit more.

Can you elaborate on the peacock that moves through that poem?

That is from memories of India—because peacocks are everywhere in the parks—and also of London. There is a park in London with peacocks where I think the Rolling Stones composed a well-known song. I think it's Holland Park; the song has the cry of a peacock in it. It's a strange, unreal bird, because its size is not normal—it's too big, and it can't walk properly. It's embarrassed, you know, by its long tail; it's too beautiful, too much. It's pompous, even ridiculous—a sort of kingdom of the ridiculous. Yet quite touching at the same time, because it looks so defenseless.

There's a line in The Recitation of Forgetting, “Did you find yourself, child? / Did you lose yourself?”

It's a question without any answer. I wanted that line to mean we search our entire lives, and perhaps the only thing we find is our incredible existence and the beauty of our search. That's all; that's enough.

Can you discuss your work as a curator of art?

I was one of the freelance curators for an exhibition called *Magiciens de la Terre*, in 1989. It was groundbreaking because we decided to mix contemporary art, art from the Australian aborigines, Tantric art from India, and many others from Africa—some of which had never exhibited before. I showed this brut Indian painter called Acharya Vyakul alongside Clemente, and the funny thing is that some years before Clemente had lived in India and bought pieces by Vyakul.

How did you first learn about the Indian Tantric drawings you now collect?

Through literature. A long time ago in a secondhand bookshop in Paris, I found a small Tantra catalogue with a few poor black-and-white

reproductions. In the catalog there were two essays—one by Octavio Paz and one by Henri Michaux, which is why I bought the thing. But in it I discovered this centuries-old tradition in India that was totally abstract. I was glad to discover that one invents roughly nothing. Nothing against Agnes Martin—she's great—but what she was doing was not specifically occidental. Take, for example, Japanese haiku. There are some regions in Africa, I think it is in Mali, where their way of not writing but saying proverbs is very similar to the haiku form. For centuries in India there was a small writing school in Orissa in which they wrote in fact a kind of haiku. This sort of thing makes me happy, because I think we are all the same, and if you really search you will find so many of the same things in different places, like yodeling in Switzerland and in North Vietnam. It's amazing.

When you're traveling and collecting drawings in India, does your writing mirror that search?

The writing is very separate. I never went in any ashram or things like that, but I love the country, I love the people, I love the extreme contradictions of this nation, because it is at once meditative and violent. And of course I was impressed to find these totally abstract Tantric drawings in so baroque a civilization.

Going back to your accident, I feel like sometimes your poems insist on the solidity of things, or the presence of the body. Picasso once said something like, "It's amazing we do not dissolve in the bathtub."

Yes, that's true, exactly. I sign it.

What were you doing in India at the time of your accident?

I was searching. It was my first voyage in order to try to find some traces of Tantric art, and the accident took place a few days after I arrived. After, I didn't want to go back to India. I was totally in shock. But two and a half years later the shock was digested, and I said to myself, "You must go again; otherwise it will haunt you." I was scared when I went back to India. Extremely scared. A friend told me "Well, first you could go and see Mr. So-and-So." He was a mix of the kind of people you can find in India: a bit of an astrologist, a bit of a soothsayer, a bit of a guru. I told him, "I have this big problem: I would like to continue my research, but I'm very scared." He came out with a big bowl of sand and said, "You have just one thing to do: wash your hands in the sand, and after don't touch it." So I did this, and he read the sand, and he said, "Okay, you have paid your tribute to the goddess"—in Tantrism the god is a goddess—"and you can go ahead. You must do it secretly, though. To the people you meet you just introduce the human being you love, so it will be a secret." He was very kind; he gave me two addresses of families where they still practiced Tantric art. And it began like that.

Can you describe a drawing and how it works?

One piece looks a Parisian underground ticket. It is a long, quite long, rectangle, and the base is more or less a wide yellow or beige—these kind of colors. It is a kind of bar coming from one side to the other, and the meaning is . . . well, it is energy crossing the world. It is very simple.

Is this a tradition that is handed down within specific families, or can anyone pick up this practice?

Those who do not come from a Tantric family do not touch it because they are a bit scared. Well, I myself experienced it with this strange accident.

Since these drawings were made as and for Tantric meditation, was it strange buying them, you know, changing over their system of value, currency?

First these pieces were made for meditation, but even in India, even centuries ago, there were collectors—some people had small collections of these things because they found them beautiful and loved them. So it always existed, but very discretely for the simple reason that the “production” is so fine, is so small.

When you're going out to find drawings, what do you look for?

Really beautiful pieces, as far as my taste is concerned. But at this moment, my taste is no more my taste. It's like with African Masks: when a mask is good, the mask is good. When the little Tantra is good, you feel it—the vibration is right. Even with monochromes, you can feel that.

Do you think poems are the same?

Yes, definitely. Forever.

You've done numerous collaborative creative projects with contemporary artists. How do these begin?

Quite often they are friends, so it's not demanding—it's just a new branch in the friendship. But from time to time I like the work of somebody, and I approach him or her. For example, there is an artist in France named Philippe Favier whose work I like very much, especially his engravings. So I asked him. I didn't know him at all, and I didn't know anybody who knew him. I just had his address through a gallery. I sent a text, and he said okay. It's quite clear like that. Most of the time I send a text to the artist, and he or she works around it as he or she wants. I began with some French artists: Zao Wou-Ki, Olivier Debré, Marc Couturier, Monique

Frydman, Valérie-Catherine Richez, François Bouillon. And with some foreigners: James Brown, Jaume Plensa, Suzan Frecon.

Who haven't you worked with that you'd like to?

The dream of the dream would be Cy Twombly. He is deep, light, and great. Just a dream. There are not many others I would like to work with, but a few: Christian Boltanski, Giuseppe Penone, Pierre Soulages, and of course some American painters. One of these days I will put my shyness under my shoes.

Do you make art as well?

Not really. Some years I began to send friends poems written on reflective things like the gold foil that chocolate comes wrapped in. I sent one written on a mirror, and suddenly I decided to do an entire book on mirrors and show them in a gallery, the Agnès B Gallery in Paris. The show was composed of eighty-one mirrors displayed in a very long line—something like twenty meters. You can read the book, and in fact when you read something in the mirror, the mirror disappears. You just read, and you can't see yourself anymore. It makes the world slower.

Why the mirrors? Why the disappearances?

I have a kind of gratitude for the most feeble and less advanced people; they are really the mirror for me. If you have a sharp and strong look to yourself, well, it's okay, but it could be so much more . . . blue, for example. Anything could be finally something present, like a color.

PLEASE TAKE BACK THE SPARROWS

Suzanne Buffam

Please take back the sparrows. They are bothersome and cute. They are brown and daily all year long. They make a plaything of the wind and the spruce. They come too close. They look right at me with their tiny black eyes. They dart through spaces. They pick up the pieces and the pace. From rooftop to eavetrough to wire to branch—they spring spring spring spring spring spring spring. They are not sorry. They are not singing. Many they are one they are never not somewhere. They are not not singing. They are not slack. They fear the bluejay and the airedale. They drink from the pond! They scatter thinking. They are not asking or telling they are scattering thinking they are shivering. They are awake or they are shivering. Please, take back the sparrows. They bathe in dust.

IN WHICH I AM ATTACKED

I thought it was Spring
and went out without my hat, without
my hatchet. Wrong again. It was Fall
and the swans were eyeing me coldly
from the center of the lake,
preparing to wound me again
with the sight of their beautiful backs.
A little boy ran up
and pulled my hair and ran off.
For months you're a smudge on the rug,
watching the wind blow, maybe taking
your pulse every hour or so, and then
all of a sudden, you're It.

INTER IDEM

Rick Snyder

Dual-mirrored processing
ethernet paradiso
till nothing do us part

beat my stilling heart
I have seen the best minds
of my generation grow out

of the much-coveted 18–
34-year-old male category
to get laid

in the Biblical sense
I am not idempotent
no matter what I say

~::~~

Like a playoff game or
twisted plot ends the same

if you check your watch
or talk to those inside you

or finding an old friend
in new clothes who never

reminded you of himself
the picture believed

to be real
if not authentic

~::~~

If the cells change
to accommodate
their desires

I have no knowledge
of it taking place
in my office

or membrane
with enemies like that
who needs a family

or a memory or
the terms of our
agreement as defined

on page (iii)
allow me to reiterate
allow me

~::~~

McDonald's
Oak Lane
Olive Garden
Middle School
Evergreen Terrace

Office
Light Rail
Gallows Road

POEM BEGINNING WITH MY BEARD

It hurts me more than it hurts you.
I feel it grow as the face shrinks.
I'm sorry, Mikhail Bakhtin,
this is not a novel way
to apologize for naming the cat
after you. She's sick too.
Our funks mix like some
industrial warning for housewives
everywhere. How bad is it
to think about Bhopal
while writing a poem?
What about Medvedev, Hermes,
and militant Jews?
Logic stalks. The falcon
can hear the falconer
and never fails to lock on.
How long do I have to wait
for the world to contaminate
its selfish thoughts
with my own? I want
to be relational so badly
it can't happen. I know that.
No more analysis needed
to loosen up the words
that never really . . .
Here city, city, city.
Come on, boy, don't be
afraid to coalesce into

an ethereal smear pocked
with monuments that burn
all night, crazier than thou.
Both of us just sit there,
waiting for the catastrophe
that matches our mise-en-scène:
dirty sun to smoky screen
filters a false logic caught
again, obsessively stable.

[PRESCRIBE NO BELIEF]

Ingeborg Bachmann

Prescribe no belief for this generation,
stars are enough, ships and smoke;
it appropriates all things, certifying
stars and infinity,
as a trend begins, call it the trend of love,
purer than ever before.
The heavens hang limp and the stars release
themselves from their bond with the moon and night.

Translated from the German by Peter Filkins.

EMILY DICKINSON'S FUTURES: ENJAMBMENT DEGREE ZERO

Marta L. Werner

I come to you once again from the region of Emily Dickinson's late work, the writings of the 1870s and 1880s, and, more specifically, from the remote precinct of Dickinson's fragments. Like the limit-texts of other writers—Kafka's *Conversation Slips*, Pascal's *Pensées*, and Wittgenstein's *Remarks on Color*—Dickinson's fragments are essentially private writings, belonging more to the space of creation than communication. Never prepared for publication, perhaps never intended to be read by anyone other than the scriptor herself, they are not "works" so much as traces of thought-in-writing. It may have been the extreme vulnerability of these texts, discovered and probably partly destroyed by chance, that initially led me to assemble them in *Radical Scatters: An Electronic Archive of Emily Dickinson's Late Fragments and Related Texts*. Yet the fragments never coalesce into a unified collection; indeed, no editor can hope to bring about their harmonious synthesis. For if, at times, one or two or even several act as "strange attractors" drawing near to one another, forming a small constellation, at other times, each appears as a separate, antinomic text, far away from the others, unassimilated and unassimilable to a totalizing figure. At last, it is as if the uncertainty of the fragments' provenance commits them to the openness of an equally uncertain future. Freed from the forty bound manuscript volumes, those accumulated libraries of Dickinson's poetic production, they fly outside the codex book to the lyric's many ends.

In the close readings of three fragments drawn from the late archive that follow, the contingent, disjunctive nature of the fragments and their relationship to one another is reflected in readings that are themselves

often contingent, disjunctive, and necessarily piecemeal. Concerned with language and risk, these few fragments serve as my point of departure for a reading—as yet only imagined—of the roughly one hundred surviving fragments in which I defer a definitive analysis of these texts in favor of the opportunity to describe their simultaneous falling together and apart.

I. “WHAT A HAZARD”

In her late writings Dickinson almost never speaks of language unaccompanied by alarm: “What a | Hazard | a Letter | is—When | I think of | the Hearts | it has Cleft | or healed I | almost | wince to | lift my Hand | to so much | as as a | superscription | but then we | always Ex | cept | ourselves— [overleaf] or | Scuttled and | Sunk” (A 809).

Fragment A 809, found among Dickinson’s papers after her death, has filiations to two other documents, both letters written in 1885. In one, sent to an unidentified recipient, the lines of A 809 are slightly altered: “What a | Hazard an | Accent is! | When I think | of the Hearts | it has scuttled | or sunk, I al- | most fear to | lift my Hand | to so much | as a punctua | tion—” (A 802). In the other, sent to Thomas Wentworth Higginson, the lines conclude a letter seeking information about Helen Hunt Jackson, reported “on the point of death” by *The Springfield Republican*: “Dear friend— | I was | unspeakably | shocked to | see this in | the Morning | Paper— | She wrote me | in Spring | that she could | not walk, but | not that she | would die— | I was sure | you would know— | Please say it | is not so— | What a Hazard | a Letter is! | When I think | of the Hearts | it has scuttled | and sunk— | I almost fear | to lift my Hand | to so much | as a Super- | scription. | Trusting that | all is peace | in your loved | Abode— | With alarm— | Your Scholar—” (BPL Higg 116).

In the nineteenth century, advances in the harnessing of electricity made

What a
 Nazard
 a letter
 is - when
 I think of
 the hours
 it has cost
 or heard I
 tell most
 mine to
 left my hand
 to so much
 as as ex.
 superscription
 but then we
 always ex
 left
 ourselves

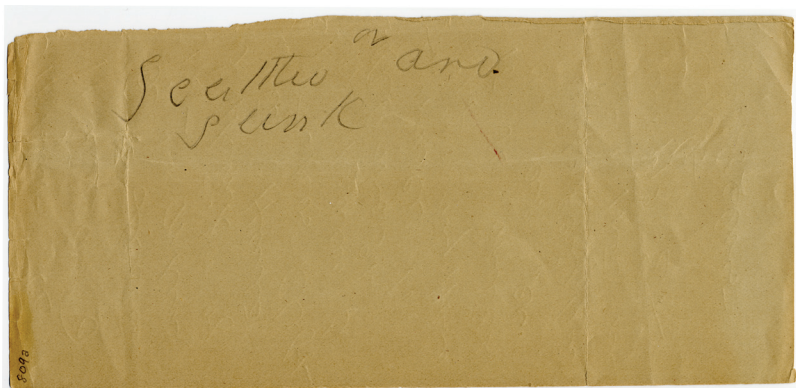


Figure 1: A 809. About 1885. Lines composed in pencil on both sides of a fragment of a torn book dust jacket now measuring 21.7×10 cm. Reproduced by permission of the publishers from *THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, Copyright 1958, 1986, The President and Fellows of Amherst College; 1914, 1924, 1932, 1942 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi; 1952 by Alfred Leete Hampson; 1960 by Mary L. Hampson; and by permission of the Amherst College Library Archives and Special Collections.

communications “swift as lightning, subtle as ether” (Peters 5). Yet the letter, even before mechanical or electronic means allowed it to mimic the angels, has always arrived suddenly. “How it seeks us out, how it aims at us!” writes Hélène Cixous, “and more often than joy, it is some death it brings us” (11). The letter halts our breath.

A “superscription” may be an address or direction for a letter written on the outside of an envelope. Yet the superscription of an address does not guarantee that a letter will reach its destination. The addressee may have moved away or exchanged worlds. “I almost fear to lift my Hand.” Six days after the news report, Hunt Jackson was dead.

Before—or was it after? no, it was certainly before—Dickinson wrote the fair-copy letter postmarked August 6, 1885, to Higginson she wrote the unaddressed, undated fragment A 809. Undated: Dateless. For the fragment does not belong to a relative time—before, after—but only to the hour or instant of its inscription. Quick, a pencil. As if bodily gesture were continuous with spiritual attitude, the handwriting of A 809 is unusually distorted. Large, recklessly formed letters suggest that Dickinson was writing under duress or in total darkness. In the second line the word *H A Z A R D* stretches across the manuscript. “What a Hazard a Letter is—” In the late writings it is language—the Word itself—that is hazarded.

Rather than pursue the genetic relations between the fragment and the letters in which it appears as a trace, I want to follow Dickinson to the place where all such relations break off. To the fragment. To language on its edge.

Like the late Hölderlin of whom Zimmer reported, “he writes as soon as he has something to write, whether on a piece of paper or a scrap of wood,” in the 1880s Dickinson seems to have written immediately and

on whatever was near to hand (Froment-Meurice 49). A 809 is inscribed vertically on the torn-away flap of a book's dust jacket. Here, language appears not along the horizontal plane of communication between human beings, but as the vertical join to the divine. The double play of Dickinson's variants—"superscription" / "salutation"—signifies the fragment's links to the mystical. Here the line of vision slants upward to the right—as in an annunciation: "What a Hazard a Letter is—"

When A 809 appears in the letter to Higginson, it *reappears* as a citation. A human hand writes it, quotes it in a human context. But the hand that scribbles the text in the dark is transfixed only by words that wake her and that come from something outside her. The blur of the fragment—its illegibility—is the blur of a hand writing a voice it is hearing.

"What a Hazard a Letter is—" But this is not the end of the message. Right beside the peril of language is the joy of language. "I *almost* [emphasis added] wince to lift my Hand to so much as a superscription," Dickinson says. "I *almost* fear," "I *hardly* dare," she repeats (emphases added). And then the hand rises and she writes. In the very moment when the Heart is cleft or healed, in a single pencil stroke, she accepts the wager language is. "A single | ~~one~~ a thrill can | end a life or | open it | ~~anew~~— | forever" (A 871v). The alarm that attends language is also arousal. The joy bursts out.

Like Pascal's famous wager, Dickinson's fragment A 809 describes an ontological situation in which there are in fact no options. Though language is a hazard—the "most dangerous of goods," by Hölderlin's claim—it is finally the only connection we have to each other and to that which is beyond us. We must take our chances, we must hazard language. As in the Pascalian wager, moreover, in Dickinson's it is the inward space of the Heart—cleft, scuttled, sunk, healed—that is the site of the risk.

Found among her papers after her death, the fragment is evidence that

she knew she could not both embrace the hazard language is and remain “ex-cepted” from it. In the end, Dickinson would wager everything—the literally thousands of manuscripts scattered in her room, the thousands more scattered beyond it—upon it.

A “superscription” is a heading or a signature. “What a Hazard a Letter is,” written in pencil on a crumpled and torn scrap of paper, paradoxically serves as the only possible superscription to Dickinson’s undated, undressed, and untitled oeuvre.

II. “WE DO NOT HEAR IT COMING—”

Among Dickinson’s fragments of the 1870s and 1880s are several that allude to the end of the world. A few, like the following fragment, look back on the end from such a great distance that the ended world looks infinitesimal—as tiny as the tiny scrap of paper on which Dickinson scribbled the lines: “Pompeii— | All its occupations | crystallized—Every-body | gone away—” (A 331).

More often, however, Dickinson writes of the end of the world—the *paradiso terrestre*—in the present absolute:

The consciousness of | subsiding power is | too startling to be | admitted
by men—but | ~~best~~ comprehended by | the meadow over | which the
Flood has | quivered, [~~quivered~~—rumbled—] when the | waters return
to | their kindred, and | the tillage [acre—] is left | alone—. (A 444a)

It is very still in the | world now—Thronged | only with Music, like the
| [overleaf] Decks of | Birds— | and the Seasons | take their hushed |
places like figures | in a Dream—. (A 822/A 822a)

33/
 Pompeii -
 All its occupations
the
 crystallized - Every one
 gone away

figure 2: A 331. Last decade. Lines composed in pencil on a fragment of laid, off-white stationery now measuring 3.4 × 12.6 cm. Reproduced by permission of the publishers from *THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, Copyright 1958, 1986, The President and Fellows of Amherst College; 1914, 1924, 1932, 1942 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi; 1952 by Alfred Leete Hampson; 1960 by Mary L. Hampson and by permission of the Amherst College Library Archives and Special Collections.

444
 3
 The consequences of
 subsidizing power is
 too startling to be
 admitted of men - our
 best comprehended by
 the meadow over
 which the flood has
 quivered, when the
 waters return to
 their kindred, and
 the tillage is left
 alone - acre -
 comprehended perhaps
 as the meadow, over
 which thousands have
 quivered - tumbled -

figure 3: A 444. About 1879. Lines composed in pencil on a fragment of wove, white stationery embossed Weston's Linen and now measuring 12.5 × 10.1 cm. Reproduced by permission of the publishers from *THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, Copyright 1958, 1986, The President and Fellows of Amherst College; 1914, 1924, 1932, 1942 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi; 1952 by Alfred Leete Hampson; 1960 by Mary L. Hampson; and by permission of the Amherst College Library Archives and Special Collections.

822
It is very still in the
world now - Thronged
out, with music like the

no. 2. 6. 8. 5. 6.
Rivers -

822a
And the seasons
take their heaped
places like figures
in a dream -

figure 4: A 822. About 1885. Lines composed in pencil on two fragments of paper pinned together. The first fragment is composed on a piece of torn, off-white wrapping paper and measures 3×16.7 cm.; the second fragment is composed on a torn and cut section of brown wrapping paper and measures 16.1×10.6 cm. Reproduced by permission of the publishers from *THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, Copyright 1958, 1986, The President and Fellows of Amherst College; 1914, 1924, 1932, 1942 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi; 1952 by Alfred Leete Hampson; 1960 by Mary L. Hampson; and by permission of the Amherst College Library Archives and Special Collections.

In these late, barely lyrical writings, the acceleration of all the trends pointing to the destruction of existing conditions ends in solitude and stillness. In the washed-over landscape of these texts there are no longer any spatial or temporal reference points to orient us. It is not day or night or summer or fall or winter or spring. It is not anywhere or nowhere. It is only now. A present so dilated that it reminds us—is this possible?—of the conditions of eternity. Not surprisingly, these fragments alluding to the end of the world are not addressed to a person in particular and may not be to any person at all. They have no interlocutor. They take the grammatical form of hieratic statements. What speaks in them seems more like language speaking than the nearer sound of a human voice.

At the end of the world, we ask, “What happened?” and the question brings us face to face with a paradox: it is only possible to ask, “What happened?” because the end of the world is never the end.

In the following fragment, now called A 879, a call for vision is answered by the end of the world that is both recollected and still awaited at the text’s close:

We must travel | abreast with | Nature if we | want to know | her, but
where | shall be obtained | the Horse— | A something | over takes the
| mind—we do | not hear it | coming. (A 879)

As in the fragments cited above, all points of orientation, all traces of the local have been swept from the scene. From this abstract landscape, the “I,” too, has departed, replaced by a more anonymous witness, the “we” who is almost already no one. In the opening line of the fragment, Dickinson seeks the medium that will carry us through Nature at Nature’s own speed. The prerequisite for knowledge—the revelation of Nature—is velocity. Yet just as the search is to begin—even *before* it can begin—the “we” of the fragment is overtaken by a “something” that “comes” from the outside

879
 No must travel
 a breast, with
 Nature if we
 want to know
 her, out where
 shall be obtained
 the horse- something
 a something
 over takes the
 mind - on to do
 not hear it
 coming
 ceremony

figure 5: A 879. Last decade. Lines composed on a cut fragment of off-white wrapping measuring approximately 12.5 x 14.5 cm. Reproduced by permission of the publishers from *THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, Copyright 1958, 1986, The President and Fellows of Amherst College; 1914, 1924, 1932, 1942 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi; 1952 by Alfred Leete Hampson; 1960 by Mary L. Hampson; and by permission of the Amherst College Library Archives and Special Collections.

and that outpaces both language and Nature. While the literal ear never hears a sound of approach, the speculative ear has the feeling of opening in the uncanny quiet of a world light-years from this one: "And Nature is a Stranger yet" (J P 1400). *What happened when the world ended?* In the wake of the end of the world where there is such tranquility another more disquieting doubt steals forth: *Did it happen? Did anything happen?* The exceptional beauty of the fragment may be inseparable from its radical hesitation in the face of this question.

What "comes" and "overtakes"? *Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. . . . Come and see. . . . Come and see. . . . Come and see. . . . Come and see. . . .* (Revelation). To "overtake" means to "cross a space. . . to come upon something unexpectedly, suddenly, or violently. . . ." (OED). The concordances to Dickinson's poems and letters that catalog her uses of the word "overtakes" along with its many cognates, *overwhelmed*, *overturned*, *overpowered*, *overmastered*, *overflowed*, suggest that in the 1880s, the experience of being overtaken is most often associated with the experience of engulfment—by darkness, by the tide, by grace. Yet the "something" that "comes" and "overtakes" is never specifically identified in A 879. "It" is the expectation of a name that is still missing, a pronoun that stands in for an absent noun.

The fragment that neither names the "something" that "comes" nor offers a narrative of this coming reveals instead the structure of this event. The opening phrase—"We must travel abreast with Nature if we want to know her, but where shall be obtained the Horse—" is at once enjambed with and estranged from the closing phrase—"a something overtakes the mind—we do not hear it coming"—by a dash that initiates the braking action of caesura, what Hölderlin called the "anti-rhythmic suspension" of temporal progression, and creates the breach through which the unnamed "something" enters. The abrupt enjambment of the phrasal units coupled with the action of the caesura brings about a negative movement whereby

the witness who seeks the divine horse on which to ride alongside Nature is suddenly carried to another world. While the opening cadence of the fragment is composed in the conditional mood, the closing cadence is cast in the present tense. The witness who seeks is overtaken in the course of the search. Here the abolition of time—the empty transport figured by the dash—is alternately experienced as the loss of language and engulfing *parousia*: “In lieblicher Blaue . . . / In lovely blue . . .” (Hölderlin 249).

What comes? *Come up hither and I will show thee things which must be hereafter. . . . Come and see. . . . Come and see. . . . Come and see. . . .* At the end of Dickinson’s work, in a fragment on the end of the world, we come to an austere definition of poetry. A 879—so far misclassified by Dickinson’s editors as a “prose aphorism”—is in fact verse contracted to its most essential elements: caesura and enjambment. The strangeness audible in A 879, however, is the effect not (only) of its austerity but of its alliance with the outside and the yet to come. The “something” that “comes” and “overtakes the mind” also overtakes the measure of poetry itself. The tension between the semantic and metrical limits that initially structures the fragment at last gives way to an exact concordance of sense and sound. The final line of the fragment—“we do not hear it coming”—breaks off, opposed not with another line, but with the air of future itself. A 879 is a verse with “neither more nor less but an impossible measure.” The “it” of “we do not hear it coming” is also a sound we have never heard before. Enjambment degree zero.

III. “A SOMETHING OVERTAKES THE MIND”

The impossible measure audible in poetry’s enjambment with the future is also audible in the event of reading. Around the same time Dickinson inscribed the text on A 879—it is not known whether before or after—she jotted down the following lines on a jagged piece of wrapping paper:

851
Did Joe ever
read one of
her Poems back-
ward, because
the plunge from
the front over-
turned soul,
I sometimes
often have-
man, times have
a something
over takes the
mind.

Figure 6: A 851. Last decade. Lines composed in pencil on a fragment of a cut brown wrapping paper measuring 16.3 × 11.7 cm. Reproduced by permission of the publishers from *THE LETTERS OF EMILY DICKINSON*, Thomas H. Johnson, ed. Cambridge, Mass.: The Belknap Press, Copyright 1958, 1986, The President and Fellows of Amherst College; 1914, 1924, 1932, 1942 by Martha Dickinson Bianchi; 1952 by Alfred Leete Hampson; 1960 by Mary L. Hampson; and by permission of the Amherst College Library Archives and Special Collections.

Did you ever | read one of | her Poems back- | ward, because | the plunge
from | the front over- | turned you? | I sometimes [often] [many times]
have— | A something | overtakes the | Mind—. (A 851)

The precise nature of the relationship between A 879 and A 851 is not known. Dickinson may have composed one as a variant of the other or they may have arisen independently and only encountered—recognized—each other in the collision of their final lines. The relation between them, however, is rhythmically emphasized before this moment. The turn—the caesura—that structures A 879 is repeated in A 851 where the advent of the “something that overtakes the mind” breaks the fragment into two.

To offset the dangers of reading—the headlong plunge into reading’s abyss—Dickinson employs the tactics—the *measures*—of more prudent readers. Like the proofreader verifying his copy, or the prosodist scanning lines to locate missing feet, she tries reading from end to beginning. Perhaps it is this strategy that allows her, in A 851, to momentarily recover the use of personal pronouns: the “I” initially addresses a “you”—as if there were such a thing as a community of readers, as if reading might still be a shared experience.

Come and see . . . Come and see . . . Come and see . . .

Yet even as the “I” addresses the “you,” intimately, confidingly, they are about to be overtaken and parted—from each other, from themselves. “The mystical relationship with the book,” writes Roger Chartier, “can be understood as a trajectory in which several ‘moments’ of reading succeed one another: the installation of an alterity that provides a basis for the subjective quest, the unfolding of a sense of joy, . . . and, at the end of process, cessation of reading, abandonment of the book, and absolute detachment” (5). The reader who spends all her attention on the meter and measure of the poem is suddenly overtaken by the measurelessness

of reading itself. *Blessed is he that readeth, and they that hear the words of this prophecy, and keep those things which are written therein: for the time is at hand* (Revelation). The reader who has given herself over to the poem suddenly has no place of her own but joy, no time of her own but the aporia of reading.

As in A 879, the arrival of the “something” that “overtakes the mind—” shifts the fragment from the past to present tense. Yet the enjambment of A 879 and A 851 complicates the temporality of both texts: has the horse arrived before the poem is read from back to front? Has the plunge overturned the speaker only after the “I” has gone missing at the end of the world? In the evacuated landscape, words stand alone and magnified.

The author of the “Poems” to which the “I” refers is not named. Like the “it” that “comes” and “overtakes the mind,” “She” is the expectation of a name that is always missing, a pronoun that stands in for an absent noun. Only reading backwards—proofreading—will reveal a proper name. The reading that “overtakes the mind,” by contrast, “frees the [poem] from its author [and its interpreter] . . . from all intention and allows it for the first time to be what it is” (Frey 264). *What happened? Where are we?*

The experience of reading Dickinson describes in A 851—disorientation, worldlessness—is also the experience of Dickinson’s own readers more than a century after her death. While we work to classify and analyze her late writings—to put them in order—“A something overtakes the mind—”

“we do not hear it coming.”

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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from THE QUOTE-A-DAY GUIDE TO JUNE

Fred Schmalz

“GET A NEW MATH”

Echoes of terriers in a blind alley:
instances are not only sounds—
listen and repeat:
the instance is not static
but singular. We are rich
with reverberations, so we carry
silence unsteadily. There are
omens we haven't hatched yet.

“A REASON OFFERED FOR OR AGAINST SOMETHING”

The air calmed and everyone lowered
their umbrellas. When we leave,
we are manifestations of loss
as much as we are moving tokens.
When we pass from timepiece to ornament,
we should wrap this up and take cover.
It is a window. It will close.
We can make it back by dark.

“OUR EARS ARE NOW IN EXCELLENT CONDITION”

No end to the noises. They supersede:
to four sources of jack-hammering,
one circular saw;
If bricks were shorn clean,
we'd have a temple
erected on the cobbled shore.

SANNA

Amanda Nadelberg

When you meet a
greedy man on an
airplane do you say
excuse me, sir, could
you please keep to
your side of the
armrest or do you
let him take your
pretzels and two
cans of orange juice
and keep touching your
side with his elbow?
At the end of
all of this, I am
still without a real
sense of math or
time and I am still
not sure which
market I should
frequent. I keep
by mistake saying
to my one-eyed
friend how all these
one-eyed men on
the online dating
service I use want
to meet for something
and I'm not interested.

It's too hard to go
back to where we were
ten minutes ago, etc.
Somewhere today
an airplane will land
and someone who lost
a lot of gasoline over
some ocean will win a
piece of history. PETA,
etc., will be there with
pitchforks on the tarmac.
No, we don't test on
animals anymore. No,
I don't need to see the
ocean to know where
I am in Massachusetts.
Massachusetts is more
honest than Minnesota.
Sometimes they are called
Massholes but at least
they don't scratch
themselves under the
tray table on the
airplane. Next to me
this asshole from
Minnesota scratches
himself under the safety
of the tray table that
is to be stowed during
the landing which is
soon and when I say "himself"
I'm not referring to his "leg."

Maybe in Massachusetts
we would all be different.
Jennifer Lopez is not
from Massachusetts but
she is so honest she doesn't
want a fashion show to
be "too real" she wants
magic like the movies.
I'll be straight with you
I watched her program
two and a half times. And
I didn't used to floss too
often but my friend just
discovered eight cavities
so now I do it as much
as I can stand. Soon
Massachusetts will be
the president of this
place and we will all
be honest with such
beautiful teeth and
a sense of water. It
makes you honest I
swear. Good people
are honest and good
people floss often—
they tell us to floss often
and drink lots of water.

DISCOUNT RITUAL IN 4 PARTS: “BAG OF AFRO”

Douglas Kearney

afro	on	skull
skull	wrap	brain
brain	hatch	dreds
dreds	come	calling
calling	me	dred
dread	catch	brain
brain	wrack	skull
skull	shed	afro
afro	in	bag

afro in bag
 “you gonna keep that?”
afro in bag
 “yeah for remembering
afro in bag
 could be used against me
afro in bag
 someone working both hands!!!
afro in bag
 in closet with katana
afro in bag
 in box with stories
 of devil deals in pool halls
 nightmares in barbershops
 & a voodoo kitchen

& hoodoo in kitchen
& afro in bag
 & matches in kitchen
& afro in pot
 & smoke in kitchen
& afro in flames
 & cinders in sink

& the apartment stink
like hoodoo gone bad
& the apartment stink
like secrets let out
& the apartment stink
with the fear of it all

THE POET AS SETTING

The jolt that comes to bones inside a tumbled streetcar

is what the painter considers as she strokes herself into story. There is less to the jolt that

comes as he shuts his eyes before the monitor, save

what he imagines—a lightning bolt, a god tapping the shoulder. He imagines the sky swelling

with ceiling fans or the guano of extinct birds,

a jolt riding from his shoulder
blades to his eyelids, dropping with roller

coaster clacks to his fingers. Here, he dreams of Frida

*Kahlo. Here, he says, let me spread my flesh out like a
table linen, let my bones be silver that touches,*

making, again, that clack. My skull will be a glass,

*set properly, I have class enough. What jolt is
it to chew over class, his body set before him as*

a reader sips (perhaps) a glass of something heady? We give

books spines, we break them. The table will have
its legs, its head. The body is upon us. Does the table have

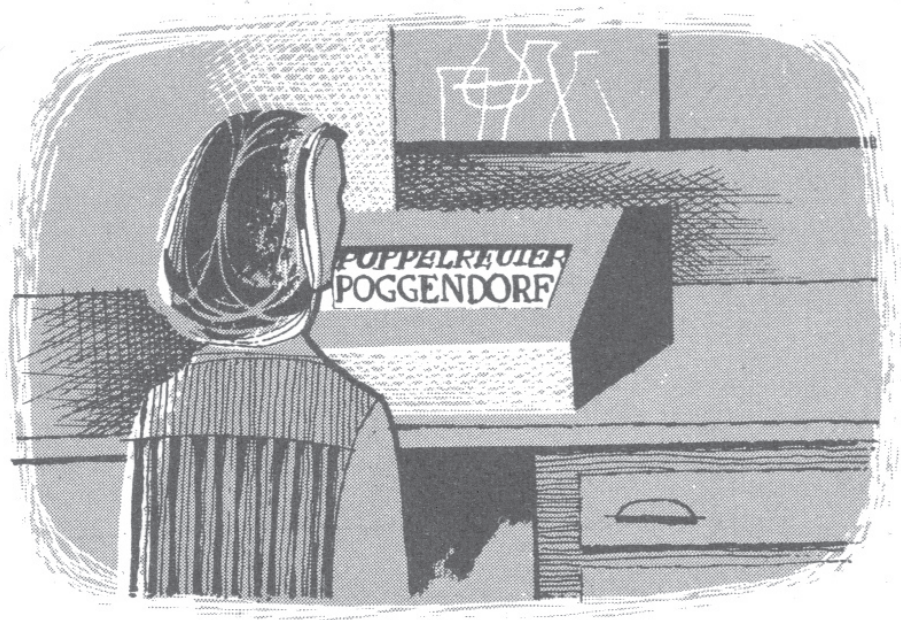
a stomach? Is it simply there to bear our hunger
without its own, like a eunuch bathing a stripper?
What is the poet without eyes or ears—reading, listening? He is
a platform—a place to set, that to set it with. And if this is
all, what will he do when the reader finishes a glass,
rises from the poet's head, and passes
into the city? Covered with a linen, he is waiting for
something to spill, perhaps a girl in Mexico rolling
her ankle in a street-
car.

HYDROMANCY

Susan Firer

The brink's
of light
(an in fact:
leaking a billion
Blue Chinese gales,
The wear of water's
Ice fields, sheet
What we say
Disappear. It takes
to wash a car
Synaptic rags
sonic logic: art is apart
Polysonic too(birdtalk two:
Wichetywichety
Spring snow
providentially
ice hymns
mattered in fog.

excitatory decimals
in fact
Lake Michigan is
gallons a day!)
fur pirates
icepackslush
ice, cakes. Happy
makes us
two feet of water
away.
lexical bobbins
of a part.
"wichety
chedp dzik."
museum of wrecks
sad farther
opossum flowers



EXPENSES FOR DEAR FRITZ

WHICH ARE NOT TO BE DEDUCTED (FROM HIS INHERITANCE) AS LONG AS HE REMAINS OBEDIENT.

Johanna Christina Hölderlin

From his 6th to 8th year living in a private home, 6 fl.	12 fl.
Annual tuition at 1 fl. 4x	2 fl. 8 x
From the 8th to the 10th year, private residence, 6 fl. annually	12 fl.
Tuition for 2 years	2 fl. 4x
From the 10th to the 12th year, daily one hour of piano practice at Herr Magist., 6 fl. annually	12 fl.
From the 12th to 14th year, daily one hour at HE. Helffer, annually 12 fl.	24 fl.
From the 10th to the 14th year at HE Präceptor, School, room and board, annually 6 fl. for 4 years	24 fl.
Annual tuition for these 4 years, 1 fl. 4x each	4 fl. 16x
4 times the fees for exams, 6 fl. each	24 fl.
A present for Herr. Rector	5 fl.
On entering the monastery to Herr Probst	11 fl.
To the two professors at 10 fl. each	20 fl.
To the famulus	1 fl.
To the cook	0 fl. 48x
Tip for the maid	0 fl. 30x
To the goal keeper	0 fl. 24x
Given to Fritz	5 fl.
Sent on Dec. 14, 1784	2 fl.
Sent on Jan. 19, 1785	2 fl.

Given to Fritz for a trip into the lowlands	2 fl.
Given to him on returning after the vacations	3 fl.
For the two professors	4 fl. 48x
To the cook for letting Fritz practice on the piano	2 fl. 2x
To the lab assistant	2 fl. 21x
To the shoemaker	1 fl. 36x
Sent May 10th	1 fl.
For the notes/music of Gellert's sheet music	5 fl. 30x
To Fritz on May 28	1 fl.

187 fl. 53x

The 20th of October during the fall vacation	
To the two professors	4 fl. 48x
To the cook	2 fl. 24x
To the lab assistant	3 fl. 2x
To the shoemaker	1 fl. 12x
Given to dear Fritz	5 fl.
November 28, 1785	2 fl.
Given on March 1, 1786	1 fl. 30x
Given April 15	1 fl.
To the two professors during the Easter vacation	4 fl. 48x
To the cook	2 fl. 24x
To the bookbinder in Esslingen	4 fl. 12x
To the accountant in Tübingen	3 fl.
To the lab assistant	2 fl. 49x
To the shoemaker	50x
Tip for the maid	36x
For horse riding of DEAR fritz	1 fl.
At the good bye ceremony for the two professors in Denckendorf	4 fl. 48x

Accounts adjustment	5 fl.
Given to DEAR Fritz	2 fl.

The costs for Denckendorff amount to	140 fl. 44x
--------------------------------------	--------------------

On entering school at Maulbronn, given to Herr Prälat.	11 fl.
For the two professors	20 fl.
To the lab assistant	48x
To the cook	36x
To the goal keeper	30x
To the maid	30x
Given to dear Fritz	10 fl.
Sent to dear Fritz on Feb. 10, 1787	5 fl.
February, to Fritz	3 fl.
April 2, for the trip home	2 fl.
April 30, at the end of the Easter vacation, for the two professors	4 fl. 48x
To the young tailor	4 fl. 34x
To the old tailor	1 fl. 50x
To the bookbinder	1 fl. 50x
To the assistant	2 fl. 25x
To the shoemaker	3 fl. 29x
Bits and pieces and tip for dear Fritz	36x

Since he received the scholarship for the Monastery, he did not request any more	127 fl. 19x
---	--------------------

During the Easter vacation the costs for the trip to and from home amounted to	8 fl.
Sent to Fritz on June 2nd	2 fl.

Sent to Fritz on Aug. 20th	3 fl.
On Sept. 10 for the trip home	3 fl.
To Ludwig expenses for food and horse	4 fl. 18x
Given to Fritz while at home	2 fl.
During the autumn vacation 1787 in Maulbronn, given to Fritz for both his professors	4 fl. 18x
To the shoemaker	4 fl. 12x
The shoemaker in Veinge	2 fl. 42x
To the tailor	7 fl. 43x
More for the tailor	1 fl. 53x
To the assistant	2 fl. 23x
For the trip home and pocket money	15 fl. 24x
Sent on Nov. 20th	2 fl. 23x
On Dec. 2nd to Fritz to purchase books	5 fl.
Sent on Dec. 20th	3 fl.
Sent on Feb. 1, 1788	3 fl.
Sent on Feb. 20th, 1788	3 fl.
Sent to dear Fritz on March 14	5 fl.
During the Easter vacation for the Herr Professors and other accounts	38 fl. 47x
Above and beyond the scholarship I gave to Fritz: for himself and for the journey 8 fl.	27x
On June 14th	6 fl.
On June 19, for the journey to Speier	11 fl.
On July 1	5 fl.
On Aug. 1	2 fl. 45x
—	6 fl.
On Aug. 20	3 fl.
During the fall vacation I sent to dear Fritz for his Herr Professors and for several other accounts	50 fl.
For dear Fritz's journey home	2 fl. 30x
To dear Fritz during his presence here	5 fl.

212 fl. 37x

The total expenses in Maulbronn amount to **292 fl. 7x**

At his first admission in Tübingen in the fall of 1788,

given to dear Fritz	40 fl.
A present for Herr Professor Uhland	5 fl.
For a bedstead and chair	2 fl. 6x
Gratuity, cost for journey and food	7 fl.

Jan. 10, 1789	3 fl.
More on Feb. 2	7 fl.
March 1	2 fl.
During the Easter vacation, given to dear Fritz	41 fl. 12x
Sent on May 5	3 fl.
On June 1, 1789	10 fl.
On June 20	2 fl. 45x
On July 1	3 fl.
On July 15	5 fl. 30x
On August 15	5 fl. 30x
More on Aug. 25	5 fl. 30x
On Sept. 1	2 fl. 45x
On Sept. 14	4 fl.
For the journey home for holidays	2 fl.
To dear Fritz given here at home and for Stuttgart	4 fl. 45x
1789. During the fall vacation to pay his two Herr Professors	9 fl. 36x
For the accountant	15 fl.
For the bookbinder	7 fl. 4x
For the tailor.	10 fl.

To Herr Hochen	9 fl. 34x
For breakfast	11 fl.
For the account of Herr Lamwiert	13 fl. 37x
For small expenses	17 fl.
On Nov. 12	2 fl. 45x
More on Nov. 22, 1789	2 fl. 45x
On Dec. 22	10 fl.

The sum for 1789	210 fl.
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Jan. 8, 1790	2 fl. 24x
Jan. 14	2 fl.
Feb. 8	2 fl. 45x
Feb. 20	2 fl. 45x
Paid dear Fritz's book account on March 1, 30 fl.	30 fl.
On March 10	2 fl.
More on March 24	2 fl.

308 fl.

1790

April 13, during the Easter vacation, so as to pay the accounts in Tübingen	42 fl.
30th, sent to dear Fritz	11 fl.
May 20th	2 fl. 45x
June 18th	5 fl.
July 8	2 fl.
July 20 for books	11 fl.
August 5	4 fl.
August 20	2 fl.

Sept. 1, sent to the academy (Magisterium)	90 fl.
Oct. 1, given to dear Fritz for Stuttgart	8 fl.
For clothing	50 fl.
Oct. 15, during the fall vacation for book printer Cota	5 fl.
Labor cost for the tailor, plus all materials for a suit	15 fl. 12x
For book printer Fuss	5 fl. 30x
Shopkeeper Hoch	14 fl. 9x
To the bookbinder	6 fl.
Shopkeeper Schickard	4 fl. 3x
For the breakfasts	17 fl. 28x
To Lamwiehrt	29 fl. 15x
Dec. 20th	3 fl.

	320 fl.
plus the account for clothing	370 fl.

1791

Jan 7	11 fl.
Jan. 30	2 fl.
Feb. 10	10 fl.
March 7, for a journey to Stuttgart	7 fl.
Sent on April 1	2 fl.
April 15, for a journey to Switzerland	40 fl.
May 5, handed over for Tübingen to pay for accounts	32 fl.
Payment for rider, there and back	3 fl.
June 1	24 fl.
June 20th	2 fl.
July 10	3 fl.
July 25	3 fl.
Aug. 1st, given to dear Fritz during a visit	5 fl. 30x
Aug. 28	3 fl.

Sept. 1	20 fl.
In addition	1 fl.
	569 fl. 8x

Up to now the expenses amount to 1411 fl. 37x

Sept. 24, for a journey to Stuttgart	5 fl.
Paid for a watch	30 fl.
Handed to dear Fritz while here	3 fl.
During the fall vacation given to pay accounts in Tübingen	97 fl. 43x
Paid for rider	1 fl.
Sent on Nov. 2	2 fl. 45x
Nov. 20	1 fl.
Dec. 1	3 fl.
As a Christmas present	2 fl. 45x
For book printer Cotta	13 fl.
	326 fl. 43x
Account of one dyed suit and silken stockings	23 fl. 37x

350 fl. 20x

1792

Sent again on Jan 10	2 fl.
More on Jan. 20	3 fl.
Feb. 25	5 fl.
March 10	2 fl.
March 24	1 fl.
March 30	2 fl. 45x

Given to dear Fritz on his way to Stuttgart	2 fl. 12x
During the Easter vacation for the Herr Professors	10 fl. 45x
To the bookbinder	5 fl. 14x
Herr Reissach	2 fl. 57x
Herr Schickard	2 fl. 54x
For the breakfasts	17 fl. 24x
To the shoemaker	15 fl. 51x
To the tailor	8 fl.
Labour for Salle	1 fl.
Rider to Tübingen	1 fl. 30x
June 1	2 fl.
June 10	5 fl. 30x
July 1	2 fl. 45x
July 15	4 fl.
July 3 (o)	4 fl.
Given to him at his arrival here	2 fl.
Given to him on his way to Stuttgart	3 fl. 45x
On leaving for Tübingen	4 fl.
Sept. 6	2 fl. 45x
Sept. 20	2 fl.

300 fl. 50x

Given to dear Fritz for his vacation in the low country	2 fl. 4(5)x
During the fall vacation given to pay for his accounts	80 fl.
Sent to dear Fritz on Nov. 10	4 fl.
Nov. 25	3 fl.
Dec. 10, 1792	10 fl.

100 fl.

Apart from the normal the expenses this year amounted to	215 fl. 50x
For clothing of 1 jacket, 2 pairs of pants, 1 black garment and one pair of silk stockings	36 fl.
Adds up to	251 fl. 50x

1793

Sent to dear Fritz on Feb. 2	3 fl.
Feb. 20	2 fl.
March 10, for a trip to Blaubeuren	8 fl.
April 20 given to him for a trip to Lochgau	2 fl.
During the Easter vacation payment of accounts:	
For breakfasts	44 fl. 14x
To Herr Heerbrand	37 fl. 32x
Herr Stengle	47x
Herr Cotta	6 fl. 24x
Herr Schickard	6 fl. 44x
To the shoemaker	6 fl. 16x
To Lamwiehrt	24 fl. 41x
To the bookbinder	9 fl. 6x
To the tailor	8 fl. 55x
Sent on May 1	2 fl.
May 20	3 fl.
June 1	2 fl.
June 14	1 fl. 30x
June 20	2 fl.
July 1, 1793	5 fl.
August 1	10 fl.
Nov. 1 for payment of accounts	157 fl.

For the journey to Blaubeuren and during his stay	8 fl. 30x
For the journey to Stuttgart and to the low country	4 fl.
For the journey to his exams and to Tübingen	6 fl.
At Waar for clothing	125 fl.
Traveling cost for the trip to Sachsen.	100 fl.

686 fl. 40x

The sum of expenses until now 2412 fl.

At his departure to Sachsen I gave him the following:

1 clock from Simonlor with the value of	30 fl.
A ring with 7 diamonds	15 fl.
A set of silver buckles	12 fl.
A pair of silver spurs	10 fl.
A silver neck clasp	1 fl.

Books, whose value I cannot determine.

Clothes

A fine outfit of brown cloth	
A minor outfit in gray	
A new cloth overcoat	
A silk waistcoat	
Two from Cashmere	
3 pairs of new pants. Since these clothes have already been listed above, I only indicate the cost of labor and lining (13 fl.)	18 fl.
1 used, brown cloth outfit	10 fl.
1 old overcoat	6 fl.
1 yellow, stitched Cashmere waistcoat	2 fl.

1 pair of black cloth pants	5 fl.
1 black material waistcoat	1 fl.
A doublet lined with special fustian lining	4 fl.
Another fustian doublet	1 fl.
One pair of overtrousers from Bieber	5 fl.
A lined coat and 2 yards of cloth at 20x	2 fl.
One pair of used boots	4 fl.
One pair of new shoes	4 fl.
One pair of felt slippers	1 fl.
One used hat	3 fl.
24 fine linen shirts; half of them new at 3 fl. each and the other half at 2 fl. each	60 fl.
6 new night gowns	12 fl.
2 pairs of silk stockings at 5 fl. each	10 fl.
3 pairs of fine dyed and white cotton stockings at 2 fl.	6 fl.
A dozen understockings at 30x a pair	6 fl.
2 fine muslin and 1 black silk neck scarf	6 fl.
6 fine linen neck scarves and 6 neck ties	4 fl.
24 handkerchiefs at 30x each	12 fl.
4 white cotton caps at 20x	1 fl. 20x
12 wash cloths at 15x each	3 fl.
1 large suitcase	6 fl.

260 fl. 20x

1795

March 30, sent to Jena	100 fl.
In addition on May 16 for a pair of pants	11 fl.
June 20, postage charges for the suitcase from Jena	13 fl.
July 24, given to dear Hölderlin during his journey home	8 fl.

Given to him for a trip to the low country	5 fl.
Nov. 21 for a journey to Stuttgart	10 fl.
Dec. 15, given to dear Hölderlin to pay for a suitcase, the tailor and shoemaker at his departure to Frankfurt	30 fl.
Paid the account of merchant Landauer for clothes	95 fl.

1799

Aug. 19, sent to Homburg	133 fl.
Oct. 10, again	100 fl.

1800 given to him at his visit here	33 fl.
June 1, sent to Homburg	66 fl.
June 20, given to him for Stuttgart	50 fl.
For furniture and clothes and the expeditor of his things	15 fl.
July 15, sent to Stuttgart	25 fl.
August 26, for a desk	25 fl.
Sept. 4, to purchase wood	11 fl.
Nov. 9	2 fl. 45x
Nov. 24, to pay the account at Herr Landauer	46 fl.
Dec. 1, before the departure at Stuttgart	15 fl.
Dec. 30, cost of board at Herr Landauer	116 fl.
Lodging/rent	20 fl.

1801 part of the traveling cost to Hauptwiesl	33 fl.
June 15, to Herr Landauer to clear the account	47 fl.
Paid for dear Hölderlin's suitcase from Hauptwiesl.	8 fl.
Sept. 23, toward a journey to Stuttgart	5 fl. 45x

To Hölderlin for a trip to Bourdon	55 fl.
To Herr Landauer at Waar for clothes	43 fl.
For the tailor's, shoemaker's account and paid for other items of clothing	29 fl.

1140 fl. 30x

1802

Aug. 30, paid Herr Landauer what he had advanced dear Hölderlin for his trip to Bourdon	100 fl.
1803 Traveling expenses on the occasion of dear Hölderlin's departure to Homburg	50 fl.
1804 Feb. 15, sent to Homburg	200 fl.
July 9, sent to Homburg again	100 fl.
1805 Again, March 1st	200 fl.
1806 Sept. 16, traveling costs from Homburg to Tübingen	137 fl.
an overcoat and pants, including labor	31 fl. 30x
Oct. 28 Board and lodging at the clinic	75 fl.
For male nurse a present, some wine and other odds and ends	18 fl.
1807 Total expenses for dear Hölderlin amounted to	190 fl.
1808 Total expenses for dear Hölderlin came to	260 fl.
1809 The expenses at Herr Zimmer came to	268 fl.
1810 The expenses sent to Herr Zimmer amounted to	271 fl.
1811 Sent to Herr Zimmer for dear Hölderlin	287 fl.
1812 Again for Herr Zimmer	266 fl.
1813 Paid for dear Hölderlin	256 fl.

1814	To Herr Zimmer for dear Hölderlin	255 fl.
1815		256 fl.
1816		300 fl.
1817		308 fl.
1818		282 fl.
1819		252 fl. 21x
1820		252 fl. 42x
1821		262 fl.
1822		286 fl.
1823		291 fl.
1824		284 fl. 31x

1806 the total comes to 4006 fl.

Up to 1814, Jan 1, the expenses come to 6266.

[continued by Hölderlin's nephew, Fritz Breunlin]

1825	60 fl. 37x , (for a settee 36 fl. 6x)	
	59 fl. 23x, 73 fl. 51x , 80 fl. 23x	310 fl.
1826	72 fl. 41x, 60 fl., 63 fl. 9x, 79 fl. 3x	274 fl. 53x
1827	56 fl. 42x, 66 fl. 33x, 80 fl. 30x, 57 fl. 49x, & 4 fl. 16x	265 fl. 50x
1828		56 fl. 15x
	&	1 fl. 30x

6647 fl. 52x

MY LAST WILL

Nürtingen, 15th October, 1808

Since I do not know whether God is going to call me from this world sooner rather than later and whether I will be able to convey these messages for my children in person or in writing, I request that the following will be accepted.

Since I do not plan to shortchange any of my children, I hope that they are not going to blame me, if I beg my dear daughter and younger son, that they are not going to count the expenses for their pitiable brother for his studies, his travels as Hofmeister, nor all those expenses incurred during his sad mental illness. I ask this because I had the capital/income from his inheritance for longer than that of the other two children, so that apart from the capital inherited from his father and cousins, the wealth I will leave will be divided between the siblings in equal parts. Just in case God has decided to keep the poor one in his sad state, where he does not need much in the way of furniture, his two siblings are to divide my furniture between themselves in two parts. Since I hope that the interest and the salary which he receives annually will be completely sufficient to satisfy all his needs, so that the dear unhappy one shall not suffer any deprivation, therefore I ask the Honourable Justices of the Court and his two siblings to take great care that the capital shall stay intact—except in the direst of circumstances, so that it can compensate his two siblings after his death.

I hope that he is not going to interpret this as a lack of love. It is only the fear, that should God allow him to live for a long time, that he would live in poverty or should become a nuisance to his siblings which makes me express this wish.

Depending on his circumstances he still has to receive the following items apart from his bed: a doz. sets of underwear, half a dozen of all categories of whites for beds and table, also a dresser, table, and several easy chairs. He is also to inherit his share of the linen.

I commend him to his two siblings, that they take over as mother and father to the dear Unhappy one.

I also beg the Honourable Court for Orphans and his caretaker and provider to take care of the Unhappy one.

My second request is in regard to my younger son who asked me repeatedly to let him study too which I did not allow him to do for a variety of reasons. I promised him then, that he should receive a sum of 500 florins in advance as long as he did not press equal claims against his brother. This is to convince him that it was not just self-interest why I tried to dissuade him. At his wedding he received a sum of 100 fl. apart from his inheritance from his father. I hope his dear siblings are not going to begrudge him this, since he has less capital from his father than they do.

~~And so that my dear daughter does not begrudge her two brothers, her two children shall each receive a sum of 200 florins in memory of their grandmother after my death.~~

My dear daughter shall have my diamond ring, my dear daughter-in-law my large golden chain, and my dear granddaughter Heinricke shall have my small chain in my memory.

The capital of 150 florins which is with my dear brother-in-law, the reverend in Löchgau, shall be divided into equal parts between my sister and her two daughters as proof of my love. [Later addition: Since my sister died and one of the daughters is happily cared for, this shall become null and void.]

To the woman caring for my son one good dress and 20 florins in cash with the request to repay this in kindness to the dear Pitiable one.

I especially recommend him to the love and care of his siblings and to his good sister-in-law who loves him dearly. You will reap equal love and faithfulness from your children. God bless all that you receive from your faithful parents. Follow the example of your long departed blessed, good fathers and the teachings of your mother, who deeply cares for the souls of her dear children. Live contentedly and in such a way that we will all see each other again in the other world and never be parted again. This request I also make to my dear grandchildren, so that I will not lose any one of my loved ones and get to see them all again.

Written by your faithful mother,

Joh. Christ. Gockin

Translated from the German by Margarete Harvey.

IN THE DAYS OF SOCRATES

Friedrich Hölderlin

Time was God judged

Kings.

Sages.

who judges now?

Is the entire people

judge? the holy congregation?

No! O No! who judges now?

a race of vipers! false and cowardly
the nobler word no longer

On the lips

O in the name of

I call you

Down old daemon!

Or send

A hero

Or

Wisdom

[WHEN THERE ARE FLAMES ABOVE THE VINEYARD]

When there are flames above the vineyard
Which looks coal-
Black around the time
Of autumn, since
The stalks of life breathe more fiery
In the shadows of the vine. But
It is a beautiful thing to unfold
The sound and this brief life

[I WANT TO BUILD]

I want to build

and raise new
the temples of Theseus and the stadiums
and where Perikles lived

But there's no money, too much spent
today. I had a guest
over and we sat together

Translated from the German by Richard Sieburth.

MANIFESTO

Michael Loughran

*In your future, he says,
all things will be heavy*

with ornamentation.
Rain arrives from many directions.

I kiss and kiss the bride
and grow more wet,

more horse-like by the minute.
Within my slicker I conceal

a photograph of brown horses.
I use it to shim the short leg

on my poem-chair. A small array
of necessities, an acorn breeze:

I feel kingly, squirreling this
and that into the dark, irrelevant mud.

SNOW CONFESSIONS

I know this anatomy of whitechutzpah
The intractable whiteness of its steps

In the snow I am a white horse ranting
I move as whitely as one must

I am a resting horse
Thinking irregular thoughts

About what's sleeping
Under the white drifting

I have a heart a shadow a book
A shadowbook of heart questions

This is no experiment
Says the snowdrift in her white suit

LANDSCAPE OF WHITE

Daniel Johnson

birds

winging across a white field
which are not
there when I look

then again white birds white birds

which are not there

CONTRIBUTORS

PAIGE ACKERSON-KIELY lives in Lincoln, Vermont, and sells wine by day.

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GLENN BACH's current project is a long poem, "Atlas Peripatetic," inspired by the sounds of his morning walk. Excerpts have appeared in the *Argotist Online*, *Aught*, *Chiron Review*, and *Hutt*, among other journals. He hosts and edits the Web site Pedestrianculture.com.

INGEBORG BACHMANN (1926–1973), an Austrian poet, dramatist, and novelist, was a leading voice in postwar German literature.

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MARGARETE HARVEY is a German-born landscape architect living and working in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She is the mother of Matthea Harvey, poet. She did not keep a record of expenses for her daughter.

HUGO VON HOFMANNSTHAL (1874–1929) founded the Salzburg Festival with Max Reinhart in 1920. The Austrian novelist, poet, dramatist, narrator, and essayist also wrote libretti for several operas of composer Richard Strauss.

FRIEDRICH HÖLDERLIN (1770–1843) published most of his poetry and translations in periodicals and almanacs. In 1802, while working as a private tutor in Bordeaux, he fell into a schizophrenic state. After treatment at a clinic in Tübingen, he was given to the custody of a carpenter, Ernst Zimmer, and remained with the Zimmer family until his death.

JOHANNA CHRISTINA HÖLDERLIN (1748–1828) was the mother of Friedrich Hölderlin. After the death of Hölderlin's father, she married Johann Christoph Gock, later mayor of Nürtingen. Her papers are housed in that city's archives.

DANIEL JOHNSON is finishing his first book of poems, *How to Catch a Falling Knife*. He lives in Chicago.

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AMANDA NADELBERG's first book, *Isa the Truck Named Isadore*, won the Fourth Annual Slope Editions Book Prize and will be published in spring 2006. Other poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Octopus*, *Conduit*, and *No: a journal of the arts*. She lives in Minneapolis.

THE REANIMATION LIBRARY, based in Brooklyn, provides source material for art projects and is committed to building a collection of materials rich in visual information. The library's Web site is www.reanimationlibrary.org.

RAYMOND ROUSSEL (1877-1933) was a poet, novelist, and chess enthusiast.

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RICHARD SIEBURTH's recent publications include editions of Pound's *Poems & Translations* (Library of America) and *Pisan Cantos* (New Directions), and a translation of Büchner's *Lenz* (Archipelago).

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JULIANA SPAHR's books include *This Connection of Everyone with Lungs*, *Fuck You—Aloha—I Love You, Everybody's Autonomy: Connective Reading and Collective Identity*, and *Response*. She coedits the journal *Chain* with Jena Osman.

ETHAN SPIGLAND is an associate professor of English and Humanities at Pratt Institute. His short film *The Strange Case of Balthazar Hyppolite* won a Gold Medal in the Student Academy Awards and was a finalist for the Best Short Subject Oscar. He is currently in preproduction on his first feature film.

JAMES STERN (1904-1992) was the author of *The Heartless Land*, *Something Wrong*, and *The Man Who Was Loved*.

TANIA STERN (1904-1995) was a physical therapist and a founding member of the Auden Society.

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